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THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE



PAYABLE ON DEATH



May, June 2008 • Issue #131
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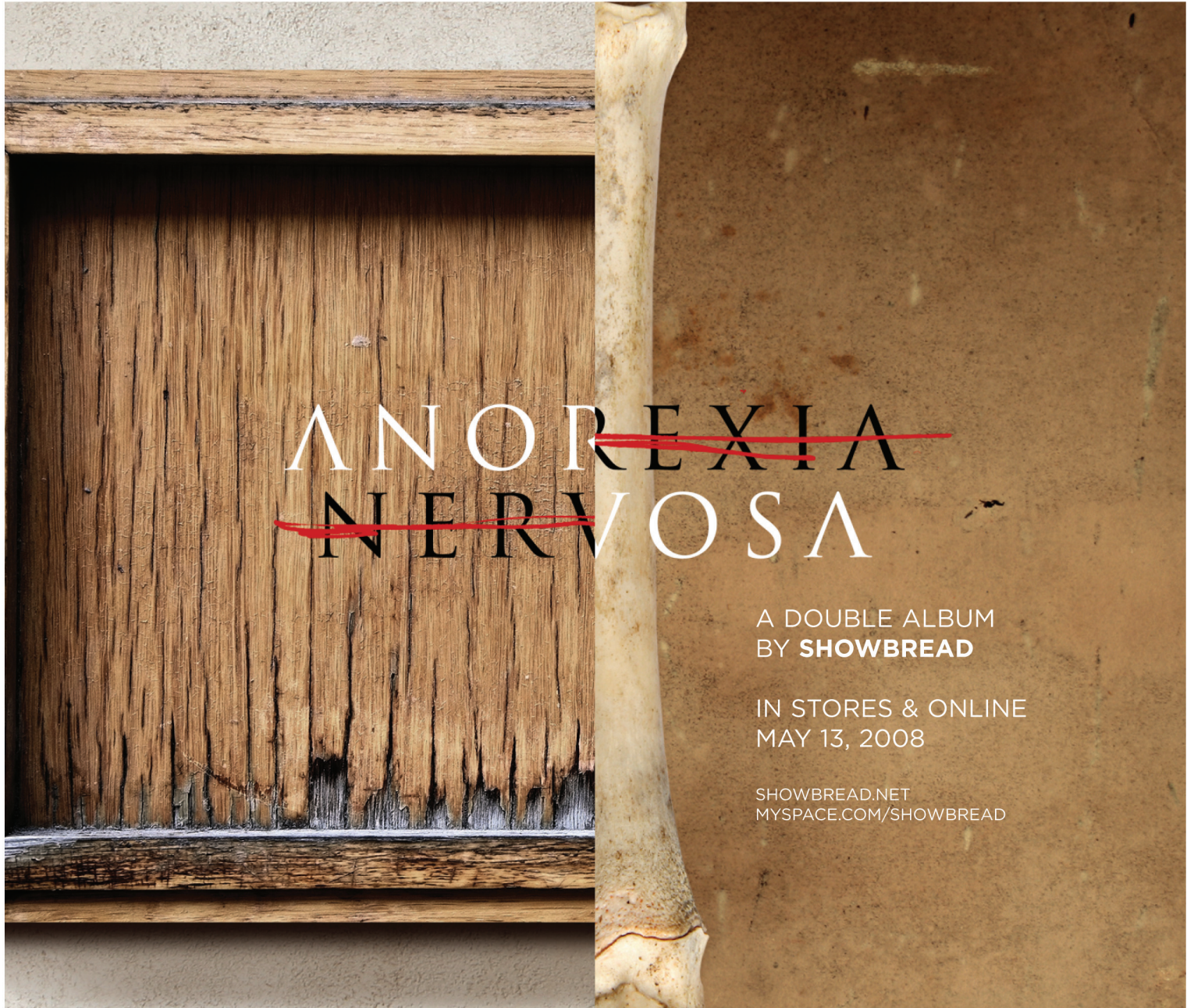
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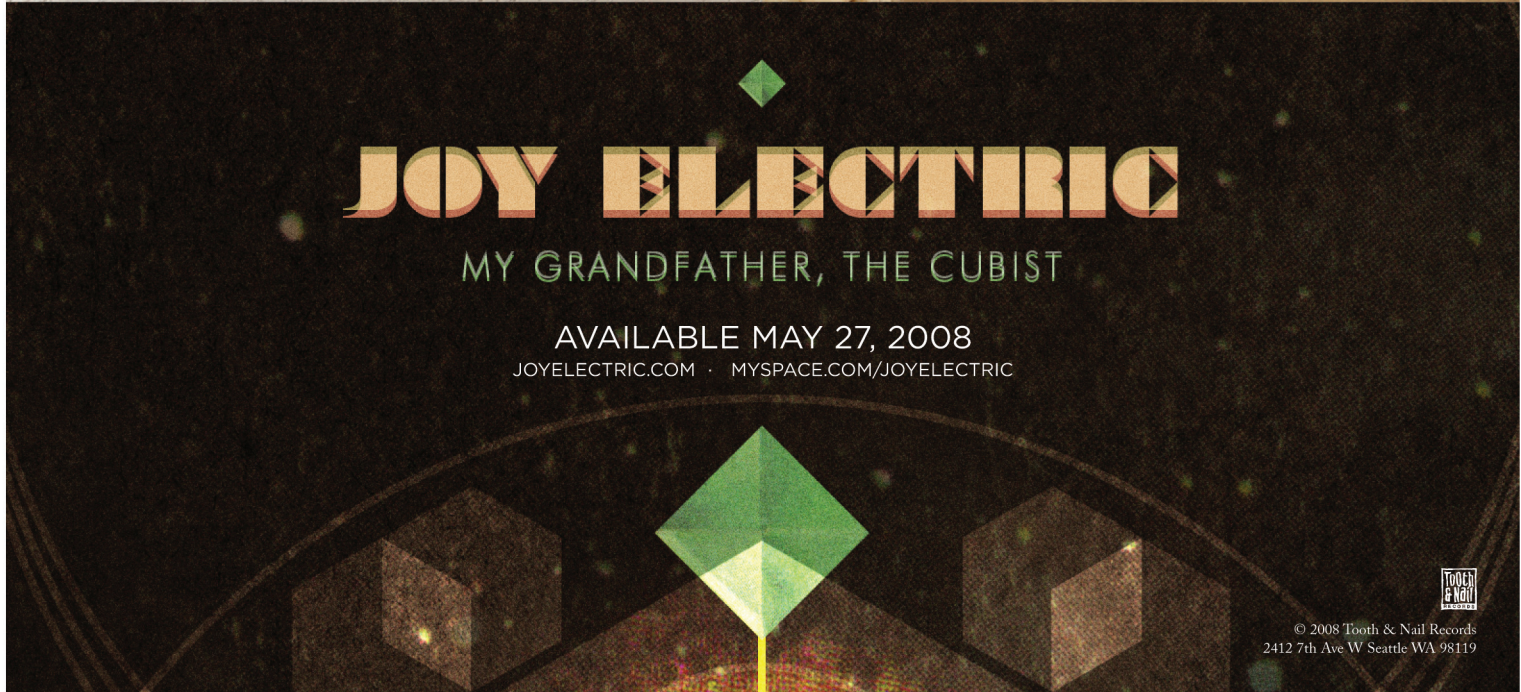


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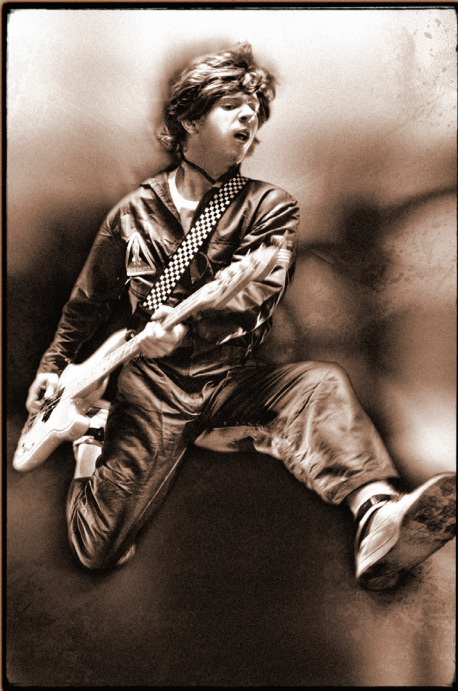
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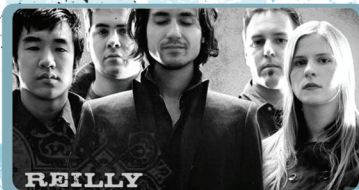
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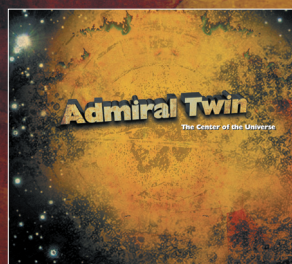
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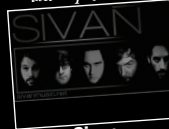
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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

I COULD BE WRONG ABOUT ALL THIS...

Yet here's what I think: When we entertain and subtly embody doubts, something bad happens. Now, I believe doubts are normal and okay. Any club, religion or organization that doesn't allow questions or doubts is not one I'm too interested in being a part of. If the truth is true, I believe, then it can stand up to questions, doubt and scrutiny. Plus, like temptations or random bizarre thoughts or dreams, we can no more prevent them from crossing our mind than we can control the weather. However, when doubt festers and we "give it a home," I think what we're doing is forsaking Jesus. I realize that's a hard thing to say, but I think we should be willing to face the harsh, cold reality of (what I think) is really happening. Believing in Christ is clinging to, trusting in, and relying on Him. When we harbor doubts and move our stance or position into one of disbelief, I believe we are forsaking Jesus and, according to Scripture (James 4:4, for example), becoming His enemy. The good news and the point behind all of this is that God has an abundant supply of grace and forgiveness for us. He is not against us. He is for us. When we turn from Him and become unfaithful or disloyal to Him, He does not return the favor, so to speak. Instead, He returns favor. He is bigger than all our questions, doubts, fears, anger, and even bursts of profanity-laced rage. He can take it. I think it's proper to own up to the severity of our actions, though. Sure, that makes us feel bad inside, but being humble and broken before God is a good place to be. Again, He is always and ever ready to receive us unto Him. If you are estranged from Him or just having a bad day, I believe He'd love for you to talk to Him like a trusted friend.

It feels good to preach a little. That's kind of what I've just done, but I hope that by stating the obvious – (that I could be wrong about all this) and that I repeat over and over that this is my belief, my opinion – that it disarms any resentment or opposition that a reader might pick up.

Man, I'm stoked about this issue. Our "Christian Rock Experiment" comes off like a manifesto of what needs to be fixed, I think. A special thanks to Haley Glasco, who interned for this issue and did a great job. Mad props to the "Grandfather of Christian Rock," Larry Norman, who went to be with His identified flying object at the end of February. We'll miss him.

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SPINNING AT HM NOW

SARAH MACINTOSH	<i>The Waiters...</i>	What a great voice. Pretty lite music, though.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	<i>IM4u</i>	CD & DVD w/Flyleaf, FF5... Wish I was graduatin.'
VARIOUS ARTISTS	<i>Take Action! Volume 7</i>	CD & DVD w/Emery, Thrice, HTD, MxPx...
CHRIS SLIGH	<i>Running Back To You</i>	Waiting for him to break into "Typical..."
JOHNNY CASH	<i>Best of J.Cash TV Show</i>	The man & tons of guests from 58 episodes.
SIXX: A.M.	<i>The Heroine Diaries</i>	Honest, dramatic soundtrk to addiction & recovery.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	<i>Change!</i>	AILD, ABR, Chariot, others rock for a good cause.

HARDNEWS

Quick & concise

HM COMMERCIAL

FEATURING GWAR

HM Magazine has launched a new commercial campaign featuring Gwar and other mismatched characters. Editor Doug Van Pelt jokes, "It's gonna be funny like a beer commercial." Filming for the commercial recently wrapped up in Pittsburgh, where the crew from Endeavor Media and special guest, Oderus (who slightly altered his outfit at the crew's request), suffered through freezing temperatures to bring you this little laugh fest. The commercial turned out great, and the HM staff is stoked to release it, so that you can laugh as hard as we have been. Look for it to air at Cornerstone Festival, on myspace.com/hmmag and youtube.com. Post the commercial on your page, show it to your friends, laugh it up.



LIVING SACRIFICE

THE LEGEND REBORN

The legendary Christian metal band, whose members went on to groups like Evanescence, P.O.D., Norma Jean and more and whose influence continues to be felt across the metal underground, is back together! After several "clues" were dropped online, the announcement has been made exclusively on the band's new official MySpace page. The 2008 Living Sacrifice line-up is: founding member Bruce Fitzhugh (guitar/vocals); founding member Lance Garvin (drums); lead guitarist Rocky Gray (who left to play drums for Evanescence); and bass player Arthur Green, who was with the band from around the same time as Gray and until their untimely breakup a few years ago. Living Sacrifice is writing new music for a new album on Solid State Records and will tour this summer with The Famine, Demon Hunter, Oh Sleeper and Advent.

News bullets

Skillet drummer, Lori Peters, has decided to call it quits. Lori and the band friendly parted ways and has been replaced with another awesome girl drummer, **Jen Ledger**.

Thieves and Liars put out a new video for "Slavin' Away."

Flyleaf's self-titled album went platinum. Hooray for them! They are currently on tour with Seether.

NuSpring Records will release the *Underground Sound Series* May 27th, introducing fans to the hottest up-and-coming Christian artists in the biz today.

Fireflight shot the music video for "Unbreakable," being the first in town to use Red One camera technology. The hit single also reached No. 1 on Rock Radio.

The **Kutless** *Acoustic Tour* offered fans an intimate evening with the band by performing acoustic and unplugged versions of their hits as well as sharing the stories behind the songs.

Oh, Sleeper has posted their new music video for "Vices Like Vipers" on their myspace.

Sanctus Real released a new album titled, *We Need Each Other*.

Gwen Stacy will co-headline the *Inhale/Exhale Tour* alongside **Here I Come Falling** and **A Girl A Gun A Ghost**.

New Method announces its plans to partner with Missions of Mercy. The organization helps children in need around the world. The band plans to travel to Honduras to meet some of the children and learn more about the ministry.

Thrice released *Vols. III and IV: Earth and Air* from *The Alchemy Index*.

Delirious? drummer, Stew Smith, is moving on. Stew has decided to launch a new creative design agency.

With Blood Comes Cleansing has been picked out of the top 4 bands to watch out for this year in Alternative Press.

The Skies Revolt Release Comic With New CD

The Skies Revolt released their new album, *Is Alive And Well*, in late March along with a corresponding comic book. The indie/rock group illustrated the comic themselves, so that the captions and the talk bubbles in the comic follow the lyrics in the songs word for word. The story follows the journey of a guy and a gal attempting to escape the mob of possessed robots and zombies. The band has left the last panel blank to allow the listener/reader to determine the ending. The band encourages fans to email their ending artwork to them; they will post various submissions on their myspace page. How much more fun can The Skies Revolt make their new album? Cool new tracks, cool new album art, and now a cool comic to go along with it!



Oceana

BY HALEY GLASCO

Some people choose to dress up as the guy from the *Scream* movies or a sad version of a super-hero for Halloween, but not the guys from Oceana.... they chose to become rock stars that day. After only forming last August, the band decided to record two demos in mid-October and send them out "just to see what would happen." Two days later they signed a deal with Rise Records.

"It is such an awesome and overwhelming feeling," says Robbie Davis (bass player). "Sometimes I forget that I'm actually doing this; I never imagined we would be signed in two days. We were just trying to make some songs; it's crazy."

Guitarist Jack Burns describes the band's journey as "a series of 'fortunate' events. All of us were in multiple local bands, and stuff like that. Some of us were even in a band with Keith, our front man, a long time ago. He moved to Washington for a while. Later we all formed one big band while Keith was still gone, and eventually we asked him to come out from Washington, and he moved down here. After he joined us we just started writing and recording songs."

Is it coincidence that the band, hailing from St. Petersburg, Florida, calls themselves Oceana and have titled their debut album *The Tide*? James O'Brien (drummer) states, "The name and the theme are definitely intentional, but the way the album turned out was not intentional."

Intentional or not, their coastal roots play a major role in their music. With track titles like "Escape the Flood" and "Antlophobia" (fear of floods), aquatic influences are definitely rolling through the album.

Jack admits that there is "not really a general message that the album communicates; each song is a message in itself. Most of our songs are inspired by life issues. A lot of people will assume that our songs are about Christianity and stuff, and our lyrics can relate to it easily, but that's not all we are writing about."

The guys in Oceana aren't too worried about sending out a particular message right now, they just want to have fun. "We're all about fun. I mean, all of us on stage are always smiling and trying to have a good time. If our fans are smiling and just bobbin' their heads, then we did good."

Oceana is definitely starting off with the right motive. Averaging in at the young age of 17 to 19, the band has plenty of time to grow. "We're not just about CD sales or getting big and stuff like that, we all want to just be better musicians," says James. "Right now we are having fun, maybe one day you'll see us on *Warped Tour*."

Superdrag is born again. The guys have been in the studio working on their first recording project since 1998. Look for their new album later this year.

Rise Records has announced that they will be one of the sponsors of this summer's legendary Cornerstone Festival, on July 5th in Bushnell, IL. Rise will be showcasing **Emarosa**, **Before Their Eyes**, **Here I Come Falling**, **Burden of A Day**, and **Oceana** on the Encore 2 stage.

Third Day traveled to Kuwait and Iraq early this year to perform for servicemen and women.

Jars of Clay's new *Greatest Hits* compilation showcases songs that have become favorites of fans around the world, as well as the brand-new track, "Love Is The Protest."

Grammy-nominated, rock band **Pillar** were in the middle of "music's biggest night." Pillar was nominated in the category Best Rock or Rap Gospel Album for its album, *The Reckoning*.

Mae partnered with Habitat For Humanity and Invisible Children charities during their 5-week spring headlining tour across the U.S. with friends **The Honorary Title**, **Between The Trees** and **Far-Less** supporting.

The Myriad is scheduled to release their highly anticipated sophomore project *With Arrows, With Poise* on May 13th

Switchfoot teamed up with To Write Love On Her Arms on their spring tour.

This Fires Embrace signed with Force 7 Records.

American Idol Season 6 finalist **Chris Sligh** signed with Brash Music.

Secret & Whisper just filmed their first ever music video for the song "XOXOXO."

It appears that **Quick and the Dead** have decided not to end their run as a band after all. They have reformed and are writing new material.

HARDNEWS

Page twelve



Enough Already!



BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

You with a yen for pop crossover R&B in the late '80s-early '90s may remember her as Pebbles. But that was before Christ took hold and she changed her professional name to **SISTER PERRI**. That was over a decade ago. At last, she has returned musically with *Prophetic Flows Vol I & Vol II* (Angel Child Inc.). And if you didn't think the gal behind "Girlfriend" and "Benefit of the Doubt" could truly innovate, think again. Ms. P's two CD's worth of flows are a mostly satisfying amalgam of quiet storm soul, praise and worship chorus structure and some kind of Protestant parallel to the mantric/recitative of Gregorian chant. My preference tends toward the first disc dedicated to the "true worshipper," where the absence of percussion aids the seven selections in becoming one long, consistent flow. The second platter of numbers for the "groov-a-holic" don't quite "groov" swingingly enough for moi, but their more traditional song structures (though all 14 pieces came from her own prayer life) are such that she may want to consider collaborating with other songwriters and recording artists. It may have you wondering what your fave metal act would sound like with more improvisatory streaks. [SisterPerri.com]

Why hasn't this happened before now? By "this" I mean the teaming up of **THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA** with some of the Crescent City's most famous and finest as heard on *Down In New Orleans* (Time Life). It's a natural question to ask because Jimmy Carter and his sight-impaired (and not) brethren in song synchronize so adeptly with The Preservation Hall Jazz Band, pianist Allen Toussaint, and others to create trad' soul

gospel with spicy, organic flair. Adding to the N'Awlins flavor, the 'Boys remake a couple of chestnuts first made famous by one-time N.O. denizen Mahalia Jackson. May you be rocking hard for the Almighty as Carter is at his advanced age when you have the same number of birthdays under your belt, dar reader.

If you are rocking already and want to let a wider audience know how hard and well you do it but don't have the scratch to hire someone to do the legwork for you, *Do-It-Yourself Publicity: For Those Too Cheap Or Too Broke To Hire A Publicist* (Lithobit Publishing) by **PHYLLIS CADELL-M** should give you pointers aplenty. Though the author keeps her married last name a secret, she's much more generous in letting newcomers and novices know the way to the media's heart, or at least its time and column inches. She includes examples of her own work as a pro publicist for you to model, and her tone is friendly and encouraging. It may be in hopes that you hire her once you can afford her, but there's nothing wrong with that, right? For about a sawbuck, this sister in the Lord lets you in on some sage advice. [PhyllisCadell.com]

Music, literature, hardware and other appropriate goodies should be sent to P.O. Box 29; Waupun, WI 53963 U.S.A. if you want them reviewed herein. And why wouldn't you? Get on it, and surprise me with something enjoyable. Until then, stay safe enough to read me next time.

News bullets

Underoath hit the studio to record their next album, which will be released later this summer.

Demon Hunter has released a new video for "Carry Me Down."

Bread Of Stone partnered with Christ In Action and Homes of Hope to help families continue to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Kekal is busy finishing their new album, and have announced that they will include an A-ha cover.

Grave Robber released their debut, *Be Afraid*. The band will be playing at the last show of the Cornerstone Festival at the Underground Stage.

Dizmas signed to Forefront Records and have recently released their new self-titled album.

The Devil Wears Prada will be touring with **Maylene & the Sons of Disaster** through May 13th.

Gray Lines of Perfection will release *Reaching The Ends of the Earth* on Harvest Earth Records on May 20th.

Everclear performed a show to help raise funds for Seattle's New Horizons Ministries.

A Road Less Traveled was named 'Best Independent Band of 2007' in CCM Magazine's Reader's Choice Awards.

Jeremy Camp joins the cast of the internet tv show, *Tyler's Ride*, in his acting debut, as Jesse, an aspiring Christian musician and mentor to Tyler, the lead character.

CCM Magazine waves goodbye to print. The mag will now be enhancing its commitment to Christian music via the internet. This kind of leaves *HM Magazine* as one of the only print publications in the Christian music scene. *HM* has arranged to take as many *CCM* subscribers as would choose so to transfer their remaining subscription in kind to *HM Magazine*. We'll be welcoming several new readers from *CCM* in our next (Jul/Aug) issue.

LIVE REPORT

South By Southwest 2008

March 7-15

BY DOUG VAN PELT

AUSTIN, TX—This annual fun-fest is an amazing time. The party atmosphere makes about everyone's feet lighter — even the overworked people that have to plan events seem to be laid back once things start hopping. It'll wear your body out keeping up with several nights in a row with little sleep, but it's good. Here's a sip of my week.

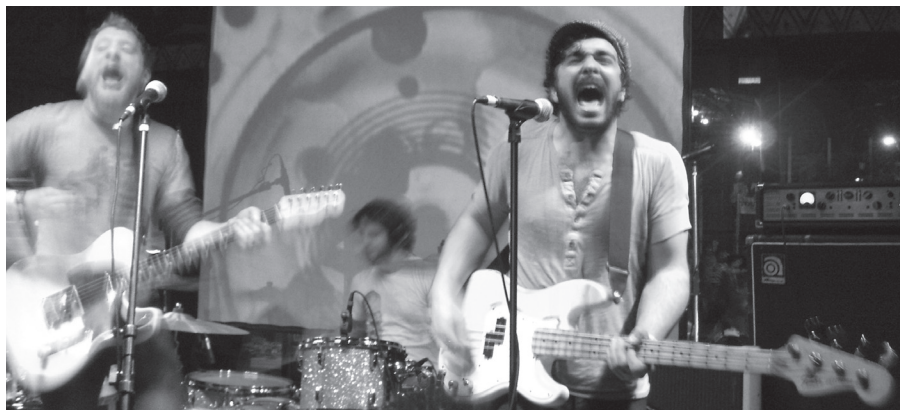
Catching the reunited **Sixpence None The Richer** was definitely a highlight of the conference. They sounded as tight as if they'd been on tour all winter long, floating through gems like "There She Goes," "Melody Of You" and "Eyes Wide Open" with a seeming ease and flawless perfection.

Flyleaf put on a memorable set that was musically solid, but seemed to have something worshipful going on at the same time. It's hard to put my finger on it, but during the entire set both my eyes and heart felt about ready to burst open into tearful and joyful worship for God. Whenever I'd describe the show days later, I still had goosebumps and had to hold back from being choked up. What's up with that? Maybe it was how they set the tone by starting with the praise ballad, "I Love You, Lord." I don't know. Tunes like "Fully Alive" grooved and swung with volume and power and when they ripped through "Cassie," it was hard not to think of the song's story, which the crowd sure knew, raising hands and fists to each beat.

The New Frontiers sounded great. It's pretty amazing how brand new songs, like "Black Lungs" and "Walking On Stones" sounded familiar already. They're just good, solid melodies that wrap themselves inside you quick. **Jon Foreman** was alone with an oboe player, and clearly in his element, telling stories, relaxed, joking around, and sounding just awesome vocally — high notes being hit with accuracy and feeling.

Edison Glass utilized videos on the back screen, adding another dimension to their tasteful, tight and progressive sound. **Daniel Lanois** played a few times, lifting lots of atmospheric chords into the air, making one almost want to look up to see the notes floating up and around. **MxPx** stormed through "Punk Rawk Show," the title track to *Secret Weapon*, and "Lock & Key" almost before pausing for a breath, sounding as energetic and "on" as ever.

Paramore put on one of those fun shows where it didn't matter how late at night (or early morning) it was. There was a perma-smile on my face the whole time. **Hayley Williams** hit all the high notes, nailing them like a powerhouse vocalist twice her size. Many times during the show, it was apparent



how popular the band is getting by the way she paused to let the crowd finish chorus lines. Later on it occurred to me: three of my biggest highlights this year were by female-fronted bands. Am I becoming a wimp, or what? ... or maybe they're just good!

Among several movies I saw, two standouts were:

Here Is What Is, a documentary on **Daniel Lanois**, which plays like a performance piece, shedding insight into this skillful artist/producer. One highpoint is when a camera behind his back shows his "performance mixing" on the console. I was amazed by how much he shared and "gave away his secrets," though most of it's intuitive. I imagine more than a few young musicians will see this and run with it, taking their creativity to a new level.

Heavy Metal In Bagdad offers a rare glimpse of the Iraq War from the perspective of young musicians in the country's only metal band — Acrassicauda (and a good one at that).



IVORYLINE

BY MATT CONNER

Ivoryline sounds much more poetic than Lionslayers, although the quintet from Tyler, Texas has certainly proven both names true. As vocalist Jeremy Gray describes it, the band's latest Tooth & Nail release, *There Came A Lion*, proved more prophetic than they would like.

"The line is from 1 Samuel and it says that as David was tending his flock, there came a lion, but the Spirit of the Lord in him was powerful and he was able to slay it. The devotional was saying there are lions allowed into our lives by God that are really deadly, but are placed there to rely on God and to come out stronger after having defeated them."

For Gray and the rest of Ivoryline (guitarist Scott Socia, bassist Robert Woodward, guitarist Dusty Kittle and drummer Wes Hart), those lions came at the clichéd time when writing about the subject.

"When we started writing for this album and getting closer to the time to record, we were hit with so many hardships and struggles from all angles," explains Gray. "Basically, we had a

bunch of lions we had to overcome in order to even make this album. We were struggling with worldly temptations that I'm sure a lot of people can relate with. It's our own sin and mortal flesh. We were dealing with financial struggles and having bill collectors call. Two months before we went to record the album, I lost my father and he was only 49. That was a big, big hardship but it actually inspired us to move forward. He was a huge supporter of me and the band. So there was a ton of things like that and the album is about how we overcame them all."

Ivoryline first formed in the summer of 2003, named after a Death Cab for Cutie lyric ("Lightness" from *Transatlanticism*) Gray found inspiring ("I liked the ring of it"). Tooth & Nail took notice after enjoying demos and, upon seeing the band live, signed them to join the label's impressive roster.

"They came to see us live and already knew they liked our music from the recordings," says Gray. "That was about two years ago, so it's been awhile. They liked what they saw and we sat down with them in a boardroom. They went to every one of us and told us what they liked about our performance. They were

very, very complimentary and supportive and seemed to like what we were doing as a band. They said one thing that stood out was that we had a certain quality that they didn't know what it was, but that a lot of bands don't have it. It was just something special they said. Who knows what it is because it's their eyes and their brains, but it was something they wanted."

It seems Tooth & Nail weren't the only ones who would eventually enjoy the ring of the band as well. Ivoryline's first single, "Be Still and Breathe," reached #2 on the Christian Rock charts as of press time. And the band says label reaction to week one sales were fantastic ("They said they would have been happy with half of what we did. So they're really, really excited"). Now the band faces a full slate of tour dates coast to coast with Aiden and Family Force Five before the summer festival season.

So it seems that post-lion, like the biblical character of David, the guys in Ivoryline are also left standing. He came. They saw. They conquered.

Lions aren't big, tame kittens

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W/BLOOD COMES CLEANSING



BY DAVID STAGG

It's almost too easy to tie in the name of the band With Blood Comes Cleansing with what's actually happened to them. Before getting a phone call from vocalist Dean Atkinson, I had a typical list of questions prepared for him, hoping the answers would lead to good conversation. But after the first question, Atkinson sounds like he's just so happy to be around. Not just as in, "I'm very happy to be in this car ride to Albany," but as in genuinely happy to even be alive.

About two years ago, Atkinson left With Blood Comes Cleansing, and from what it sounds like, the band seemed a little risky financially to him, that it was just time to figure out what to do with his life. That year, he was working as a 9-1-1 dispatcher among two or three other jobs, but was battling some intense personal issues on the level with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and mental disparity.

During that same year, WBCC continued on in his absence, signing a deal with Blood and Ink Records, and releasing their first full-length record, *Golgotha*. (Atkinson didn't really play a part in that release, writing the lyrics for one song on the disc, "My Help.") Eventually, during the lifespan of *Golgotha*,

two other members of the band hung up their instruments, leaving founding guitarists Jeremy Sims and Scott Erickson back at square one—but this time without Atkinson.

Atkinson's issues still seemed overwhelming. He was seeing a psychologist a lot. He was battling alcohol. So much so, he ended up spending 45 days in a mental rehabilitation clinic. But despite all the mental anguish and troubles he had been running into, he never once abandoned his relationship with God. When he talks to me about that year, he referred to it as "The Great Depression" and initially called it a long story and didn't particularly delve into it. He continued on and eventually saw a need to speak a bit more on it: "I don't mind sharing what God brought me through," he says.

What got him through his year-long depression eventually became a theme for the band, a theme for his lyrics, and, by default, a theme for their sophomore record *Horror*. In Atkinson's words: "During (the year I left the band), it was the toughest year of my life. I was battling alcohol, and that was something God had delivered me from years before. I just kept on stumbling. I wound up going back to a rehabilitation clinic, but I never banished my relationship with the Lord. (The clinic helped, but I saw God use me there, like with really

suicidal people in treatment. I was able to sit and share the Scripture with them. He is the one that brought me out of it. I'm completely free of all that today. I'm living proof that Jesus can set you free of those things."

And that's the "Cleansing" part: Atkinson is now married (since December), and is on the road doing what he loves. This afternoon, the band's new line-up (Atkinson, Sims, Erickson, drummer Matt Fieler, and bassist Dennis Frazier) is on their way to Albany, NY for a show on a tour their label, Victory Records, is putting on. *Horror* came out in January 2008, and it's a heavy 12-song set. But it's heavier thematically as more or less an account of Christ's love and mercy on earth, his suffering, and, finally, his redemption. "Christ came into the world to save and not to condemn," Atkinson says, a living example of his quote. "The first part of the album was all what he did for us not to have to suffer. The last part is about what life is like today; we're trying to show the way of escape through the beginning of the record. We're not trying to condemn anybody, just to show them love. ... If anyone can take something from our band, we truly want to bring that message of hope and love to people in a way that Christ would."

withbloodcomescleansing.com

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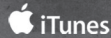
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HOLY BLOOD



BY BEAR FRAZER

Holy Blood are true revolutionaries. While the European market is dominated with black metal and satanic bands, the Ukrainian syndicate (comprised of vocalist and flutist Fedor Buzilevich, keyboardist Vladislav Malitsky, bassist Alexei "Axxent" Andrushenko, guitarist Sergei "Mozart" Nagorny and drummer Dmitry Titorenko) strayed from the norm by fusing dark metal with elements of folk and Christian lyricism. Although the combination is daring for any foreign band, it heavily impacted the younger generation.

"In the month when we gathered, we had played a gig in our church and we noticed the importance of playing Christian music, because this music has become influential (with) the changing of the youth (toward the) good side. And the changes were very great," Buzilevich explains. "We were the first band in Ukraine who has broken the layer of Satanism and Paganism on the metal scene."

With the attention of the teenage population at their grasp, the biblical collective has unveiled their latest offering *Patriot*, which delivers tasteful Celtic-metal resonance and inspirational messages. But it's been an uphill battle to gain acceptance. While Christian music is widely promoted in the United States, it was controversial and

deceptive when Holy Blood formed in 1999. Although the syndicate honed their craft over the next couple of years, they dealt with much criticism. "We were faced with the unreasonable aggression from the side of Christian leaders and we were not allowed to play at Christian festivals. Even when we were on the stage, some people took guitar cords away and we could not play," Buzilevich recalls. "It was hard to believe that your brother holds himself as your enemy."

Despite the resistance, the believers refused to abandon their path. "It is pride and honor for us to be a Christian band and this is our choice. I think that each Christian, who received talent from God, has to serve with it," Mozart proclaims. "We are called to serve God with our gifts and all our creative art is dedicated to Him. There are some difficulties, which are connected with it, but nobody says that it is easy to be Christian."

Through hard work and perseverance, Holy Blood was able to change the tide. While tensions were high during the time the quintet released their melodic debut *The Wanderer* in 2002, religious leaders and common folks became more accepting of their art by 2005, when their sophomore set *Waves Are Dancing* was unveiled.

Freed from scrutiny, the underground legends

penned their most compelling studio album to date in *Patriot* (courtesy of Bombworks Records). With tasteful folk-metal at the core, Holy Blood effectively captures the minds of Ukraine's youth with spiritual lyricism harmonized in their native Russian tongue. After a brief soothing introduction, the aggressive metalcore structure kicks into full effect on "War For The Human Souls," where the collective uses their rhetoric to battle negative ideologies. This theme spreads itself thick throughout the record, but shines on the title track "Patriot," where the central flute melodiousness compliment the electric overtones. Occasionally, the Christian entourage spices up their formula, like on "Well Tried Faith," which starts out with a beautiful Celtic flute solo before polished rhythms and amicable chants further shape the premiere cut.

In the end, Holy Blood is focused on the big picture. "Our main goal [is to] let people know about a way of salvation from their personal hells, [to] let people know they could live another life and to make good music, which will show everybody that Christian music is not worse than any another music," Axxent says. "Also, we see that young people became interested in Christ because of us."

That is quite revolutionary.

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30 DAYS

"I WANT A PERSON WHO NORMALLY DOESN'T LISTEN TO ANY CHRISTIAN MUSIC TO LISTEN TO NOTHING BUT CHRISTIAN MUSIC FOR A MONTH," SAID DOUG VAN PELT, EDITOR OF THE VERY MAGAZINE YOU'RE READING. "I'LL HAVE SOMEONE ELSE DO THE OPPOSITE, THEN HAVE YOU BOTH WRITE ABOUT HOW IT MAKES YOU FEEL."

I hadn't talked to Doug in quite some time and I assumed he was calling to brag about his Dallas Cowboys. I figured he would be gushing about their chances at the Super Bowl and I would try to avoid talking about the Oakland Raiders – which is typically what our conversations have been over the last few years. Turns out he'd called to ask me if I'd like to participate in his little experiment. I thought about it for a few minutes and said I would. How hard could this be?

I mean, it sounded fair enough. Basically: I wouldn't listen to any music for a month and write about how it makes me feel. ☹

Easy! Off into the great... Known!

You see, it's not that I won't listen to Christian music – or "music made by Christians," music "from the Christian Perspective," or "Contemporary Christian Music," etc. – it's that I don't listen to much of it. It just doesn't appeal to me. Why is that?

I'm sure I know, but I've forgotten. Don't be mad. Am I a bad Christian?

I haven't listened exclusively to Christian Music (for the sake of this piece, that's what I'll call it) for years. I haven't gone into a Christian Book Store to buy music in ages; and I haven't called my own music "Christian" for longer than I can remember.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel. I'm a Christian, and I love Jesus. I also love to make music, and have been making music for quite some time now with various groups, mostly with two bands: the Crucified and Stavesacre. Towards the end of the Crucified, regardless of what some people might say, we'd begun to feel uneasy about the term "Christian Punk/Thrash/Hardcore/Whatever-we-were." By the time Stavesacre was born, the term had just become an awkward, strangely insulting one. It was typically associated with music from a different era that, unlike the Bible, ultimately signified irrelevance to modern life. It also seemed like some sort of man-

Rock with Nothing But the "Other Music"

EXPERIENCED AND WRITTEN BY MARK SALOMON & TOM DENLINGER

made classification – primarily intended to pacify parents who wanted to feel peace of mind about what their children were listening to. The term had little to do with loving Jesus and more to do with keeping your fellow Christians from accusing you of lacking devotion.

I love and am active in many forms of artistic expression, but I have a hard time calling anything that I do “Christian.” I think it’s a weird thing to say. I don’t like to label what I do because I don’t think God needs me to – He knows I’m one of His – and if I don’t need to label it for Him, I figure I don’t need to label it for anyone.

You see there’s a certain kind of Christian that I am not. The kind of Christian that I’m talking about would probably not have even read this far, having already condemned me to the always growing ranks of the disloyal. Instead of taking my simple statements at face value, that kind of Christian would isolate and analyze parts of what I’ve written and then draw something from my words that I had no intention of communicating. That kind of Christian would skip most everything written in the paragraph and say, “He’s ashamed of the Gospel! That’s why he doesn’t call his music Christian!”

That kind of Christian is always looking for a fight and, particularly when music is involved, wants to fight about what is “Christian Music” and what is not. That kind of Christian cares only what bands are “Christian Bands” more so than what bands are “good” bands.

Coincidentally, it has been my experience that this kind of Christian seems to have really, really bad taste in music.

I’m not looking for a fight – I’m tired – but I am looking for good music.

I grew up in a time when “Christian Rock” actually just meant “Rock I Wouldn’t Listen To Unless I Was A Christian.” Christian Art meant the “Footprints” story on a notepad or maybe a needlepoint picture of a cherub with a Bible verse or “Jesus Loves You” on a pencil eraser. (Yeah, you get it.) I was taught to fear anything that didn’t have the name of Jesus printed clearly somewhere in either the lyrics or some part of the packaging. There weren’t many artists to choose from, but it didn’t matter because my parents basically said, “Christian Music or no music.” I was a kid discovering music, most of which I was not allowed to listen to. This being in the early 80’s, there wasn’t much to choose from, but when you don’t have any options you do what you can.

I came up with ways to appreciate the music that I could find – Larry Norman,

Randy Stonehill, Keith Green, and Resurrection Band/Rez – but I never did find my kind of music. I looked forward to the times when I could visit friends who had the good stuff. In my mid-teens the Punk scene had appeared in my little town and I was instantly won over – but what does a Punk Rocker do with acoustic guitars, beards, and sandals? (He suffers... and doesn’t listen to very much music – hence, the Known!) I never brought any of my parent-approved music over to my friend’s houses, because none of my friends had any appreciation for hippies singing folk songs. How do you say to your buddies from school, “Hey, lets stop listening to the Misfits – you gotta hear “Shut Dee Dô, Keep Out Dee Debel” by Randy Stonehill!”

Them’s mean streets for a boy with Wacky Christian Rock in his backpack.

I grew up believing that Christian Music would help me feel close to God – so I listened to it for a kind of worship. I also grew up believing Christian Music should be used as a tool of ministry – because that’s what I was told, but whether or not that actually is effective is an entirely different issue – so I listened to it imagining my friends giving their lives to Christ as a result of the Holy Spirit speaking to them through the songs. I found ways to identify with the music on a spiritual level, but I never felt like the people writing the music were speaking my language, despite the fact that the music was more relatable than say, choral music. Over the years my relationship with Christian Music had become similar to the relationships I’d had with countless Youth Group leaders: tolerable and trusted, but a little awkward. When I grew up, those early artists – Larry Norman, Randy Stonehill, Petra and so on – lost their appeal (Which sort of makes me sad). I found that I was looking more for music that I could get into based on what I was feeling or what was going on in my life. I needed music that was relevant to a teenage kid seeking a little independence – not music spoon-fed to me and stamped, “Parent Approved.”

Which brings me to the whole point of this piece. Life is more complicated now than it was when I “outgrew” the music I’d felt cornered into listening to as a kid. With the stress of living life outside the safety of Mom and Dad’s house, I wondered if I might find some new way to appreciate that old, odd friend, known then as Christian Rock. Maybe it would be relevant in my life again – and maybe I had been missing something all along.

I was actually excited to dust off some of the old “Classics.” Larry Norman. Keith Green. Resurrection Band. I might not have ever shared that music with my non-Christian friends or blasted it in cars while my buddies and I hung out and had our adventures, but thinking about some of those songs brought back bits and pieces of honest, mostly innocent, and ultimately good memories from a

The Christian Experiment

MY ASSIGNMENT: DOUG VAN PELT, EDITOR OF HM MAGAZINE, ASKED ME TO FAST FROM CHRISTIAN MUSIC DURING THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2008 AND LISTEN TO ONLY NON-CHRISTIAN MUSIC. HE THEN ASKED ME TO WRITE DOWN MY EXPERIENCE. FIRST, YOU SHOULD KNOW A LITTLE MORE ABOUT ME.

Background: I was raised in a Christian home. I was privileged to grow up in a solid Bible teaching church, which gave me a good foundation for understanding Who Jesus Christ is and His plan for my life. I learned to love the universal Body of Christ (all living followers of Jesus Christ) and from an early age I felt a call from God to lead others to Him and build His Kingdom here on earth. I graduated from high school in 1980 and attended Bible College 'til 1983, because I thought God was calling me to become a pastor and missionary. Life didn't turn out like I expected. I became a heavy metal singer instead. Long story. Email if you want to know details. God gave me a heart for music ministry and in 1988 helped form Sardonyx, which was an 80's power metal ministry band. Check out "Sardonyx: Holy Avenger" on YouTube to see us sharing our intense love for Jesus Christ and the audience God gave us. That was 14 years ago. I still love the Lord and I am still serving Him as a lead vocalist in another rock music ministry band called Just Rain.

I knew what I was getting into when Doug asked me to do this. To be honest, I felt some apprehension in even attempting this Christian music fast. Why? Because I have learned the value of surrounding myself with brothers and sisters who are also passionate followers of Jesus Christ. Just like some learn to enjoy and identify with a particular bar or pub, I find the local church to be a place of nurturing growth, grace, love and acceptance. I have to surround myself with people of like faith and motivation for life. I am quite experienced at getting lost in the sea of compromise, which leads to personal sin. Exposing myself to blatant temptation isn't a good idea. My own sin nature is my worst enemy and I have to learn the value of "putting to death" the things that are warring against my love relationship with my Creator, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:12-14). I have learned that saturating my mind with things that give glory to God is the key to growth and being filled with God's manifest presence in my life (Ephesians 5:18). **So when I was asked to not do this ... for a month ... it gave me some concern. I wasn't wrong...**

First, I should define a term I will be using throughout this article. Merriam-Webster Online defines "secular" as 1. a : of or relating to the worldly or temporal <secular concerns> b : not overtly or specifically religious <secular music>. Some Christians want to obliterate the term secular, because they want to even the playing field in the world

of modern music. They believe music is just music and should not be categorized as secular or religious. I am one to offer a different point of view. All throughout the 90's I watched Christian musicians, bands, radio shows and magazines start to talk like this, because they realized that calling themselves "Christians" in a secular world would limit their popularity. That wasn't how Christian metal started in the 80's. Back then, we stood unashamed to be counted as followers of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16). But many compromised this clear public profession of faith and chose to blend into their surroundings. As a famous person once said, "words mean things." Allow my sarcasm to push my point. The Bible draws a clear line of distinction between the secular (things of this world) and things spiritual that are true and lasting. 1 John 2, near the end of the Bible, is a clear example for you. **Challenge: Read the entire chapter and see how God reminds you to make a distinction between being in the world but not being "of" the world.** In fact, read the whole book of 1 John and it will blow you away. So ... please understand something ... **I will use the term "secular music" in this article because I believe this is the best term to describe the music I was supposed to only listen to.**

Being limited to only secular music for a month had some significantly negative effects on my daily routine. On the way to work I listened to the morning shows until the raunchy jokes started to fly. I just couldn't listen to them. It would have been a direct sin for me to listen, because of what Paul taught us in Ephesians 5. How many mental images does it take to bring you down into sin? It doesn't take many for me. I have to live in guarded repentance before God (Proverbs 16:17, 22:5). The amazing thing to me is how the message of the world's music hasn't changed in 30 years. It's still about self indulgence, arrogance and selling their music at the expense of their audience. There is no fear of God in their eyes (Romans 3:10-18). At first it's easy to get mad when I see the negative influences of the ungodly bands in the music industry and the effects they have on our culture. But when you understand the spiritual dynamic of the real enemy behind these secular musicians, it makes me cry out for them to be released from their blindness (2 Corinthians 4:4). **And their fans ... oh God, they are STILL a HUGE mission field!** One of the things this Christian music fast did for me was awaken my calling for the lost within this rock/metal subculture. The leaders of the music industry who promote hedonism at the expense of people will be

Rock | wol

THE CHRISTIAN ROCK EXPERIMENT 23



The Christian Rock Experiment

Mark Salomon

time when I didn't think about mortgages, sleep apnea, or the price of gasoline.

While I looked forward to hearing the old songs again and hoped they would be effective beyond just their nostalgic appeal, I also was hopeful for some of the more current artists I'd never taken the time to get to know. Would I listen to any of this stuff after the article was long finished? Was the music still dated as compared to that of the General/Secular Market? Was it better? Was there quality music from Christian people in all genres? What exactly would be the appeal for me? Would listening to this material affect me in such a noticeable way that I would see a difference in my spiritual life? Would any of this stuff... move me? I looked forward to finding out.

Problem was... I didn't have anything to listen to. Time to call in a few favors!

So, a few phone calls and the mandatory Snail Mail lag, and I was sitting on about forty CD's of free jams. 'Cause that's how I do it, YO!! (Just kidding, but one question: where in the world am I gonna put all of this? By the middle of January, my "new stuff" pile had doubled.) Most of the music was in the same genre – Rock-ish, with about five percent of the other artists representing genres outside of the Rock world. There were lots of bands with fashionable hair (must be nice) and low-angle photos showing dark, brooding, serious dudes. There were even a couple ladies – also very serious. Lots of "serious" happening here.

Wow, look at Christian Music: All grows'd up. I got nice and critical at first then realized that neither the Crucified nor Stavesacre were exactly "Happy Town." I decided I should probably not be too free with the giggling. You see, this was a concern – too much familiarity with the whole scene, hence the not listening to Christian Music in the first place.

First lesson learned: Don't be such a sarcastic jerk!

I decided to slow down, relax and... listen to the music. I wanted to be free of all the other peripheral nonsense. I wanted – needed – to see if I could get something out of it that I didn't expect, and this was not the way to do that.

For perspective, I decided that I would stick to the plan that had originally popped into my head when Doug asked about the article, so I decided to visit The Classics first.

The first night of my Thirty Days was New Year's Day. It was four in the morning, I'd just gotten off of work, and I had my usual forty-five minute drive home to look forward to. It had been a long night, and I needed some company. Usually, my drive home involves whichever audiobook I am currently listening to, but after a long night serving drinks to sweaty people I was in the mood for music. I needed music that didn't make me nauseous. I desperately needed to hear songs, but songs that didn't involve Promiscuous Girls, Apple Bottom Jeans, or Umbrellas. If I could avoid someone incessantly repeating "Gimme, gimme" or the implication that I needed to be Bigger, Better, Faster, or Stronger, I would consider myself blessed. Iron & Wine came to mind – soothing melodies, artful compositions, other-worldly lyrics – but then I remembered: None of that. So... I went to the iPod for some Larry Norman.

In Another Land is one of my favorite Norman albums. There are some absolutely amazing and timeless tracks on it which even now – three decades later – are surprising and, quite frankly, ballsy. I skipped ahead to where the favorites began: "Déjà Vu (If God Is My Father)" followed by "Déjà Vu Continued (Why Don't You Look Into Jesus)" The former is this odd, almost lounge-style jam that ends in an ominous, dark harmony; the latter is simply one of the sleaziest sounding songs any Christian person has ever managed to lay down. (The original version is titled simply, "Why Don't You Look Into Jesus" and is found on *Only Visiting This Planet*. It's great there, but it's more acoustically based – this version sounds like it could fit on the juke at your local dive bar. However, the *Planet* version does possess the classic lines, "Gonorrhea on Valentine's Day, you're still lookin' for the perfect lay" and "shoot junk till you're half insane, broken needle in your purple vein" – I mean, seriously!)

I was immediately taken back to my early teens. Back then I was proud to sing out loud, "Sippin' whisky from a paper cup... you drown your sorrows 'till ya can't stand up..." The power of the music was, and still is, undeniable. You can hear truth in Larry's voice. This cat means these words; in fact, he might have even lived them.

"That kind of Christian cares only what bands are 'Christian Bands' more so than what bands are 'good' bands.."

The Christian Rock Experiment

Tom Denlinger

held accountable by God (Matthew 18:6-7). You can't be a student of the Bible and not see examples of people who actually choose to hate God and promote their way to an innocent audience. Paul taught in Philippians 2:18-19: "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." How much clearer can the Bible describe many of the secular musicians of our day? To be honest, it was hard for me to listen to these guys for a solid month and not have access to the music of brothers and sisters in Christ.

I work as a graphic sign artist and have the luxury of working by myself. During the month I cried out for music to feed my spirit and not tear it down. I didn't find what I was looking for in secular music. For many days I chose not to listen to music at all and worked in silence. I would listen to a station for a few minutes until a song came on which openly grieved the Holy Spirit in me and then I had to turn it off. So, it was back to silence.

Did I ever find anything positive in my secular music diet? Yes. Occasionally I would hear an interesting song, which described an honest human emotion. Over the past 20 years I have known many non-Christian musicians who honestly write good music without knowing their Creator. But it breaks my heart to see them merely surviving without ambition or hope for the future. Obviously, there are a lot of fabulous musicians to learn from musically. But lifestyle, personal integrity and character should be in the forefront of things we choose to pattern our lives after. For the bands and musicians in the secular world who have respect for themselves and attempt to answer some of the questions of life, I applaud them. But there are many more who are obviously searching for some kind of eternal significance. For those of us who know our Creator, we should see this as a beacon of distress. Picture a small lifeboat adrift in an icy, murky fog shooting their last flare for help into the impersonal darkness. Please allow me to remind you fellow followers of Jesus Christ that we have the answers that people are looking for as well as a command from God to make disciples of Him (Matthew 28:19-20). We cannot compromise our convictions in order to somehow "fit in" with a world which is hostile to our faith.

Philippians 2:20 says, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." This is my identity as a follower of Jesus Christ. This is who I am. And this is who my brothers and sisters are who also know Jesus Christ. We are honored and privileged to live

in this time when there is so much music available to us that builds us up in our faith instead of tears us down.

Because I am an artist and a musician called to making disciples of Jesus Christ among the rock/metal subculture, I have learned to observe from the mechanics of the world's art while guarding myself from the mindset of idolatry (Colossians 3:5). But that is always tough. I've learned the value of making reconnaissance missions into the world's territory to learn how to minister to them in a language they understand, but retreating to our camp to keep focused and strong. I've been doing this for 20 years. But not being able to listen to Christian music was like getting lost in enemy territory without knowing where my camp was. Thank God for His revealed Word to us. I spent time reading and listening to Bible teaching, which helped me stay focussed. Some of you might think, "Dude, you've been a follower of Jesus for 36 years and you have a hard time staying focused?" Yeah, that's right. The Bible says this "fight" or battle between my sin nature and the Holy Spirit living inside me will be with me 'til the day I die. Just before Paul died, he said, "I have fought the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7-6)." That is my goal as well.

Philippians 2:12 says it well: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." That is my advice to you. Always remember that Satan's goal is to rip you to shreds (1 Peter 5:8). Do not envy evil men (James 3:16). Instead, make it your goal to lead a life of godliness because of your love for Jesus Christ. But remember, this will be the harder road and the world will persecute you for it (2 Timothy 3:12-14).

Conclusion: I am a follower of Jesus Christ and I cannot live without spiritual nourishment. Fasting from Christian music brought me to two conclusions:

1. I can learn from the world's music as a musician.
2. I can also clearly hear their heart's cry for truth.

My calling and responsibility is to give them answers which are only found in the Bible.

—Tom Denlinger
lightsbshine777@comcast.net
lightsbinministries.com



"On the way to work I listened to the morning shows until the raunchy jokes started to fly. I just couldn't listen to them."



The Christian Rock Experiment

Mark Salomon

As I drove along the freeway, the music played on. Southern California is actually kind of beautiful in the middle of the night, but it's also a lonely place – especially when you follow up a busy, crowded nightclub full of people celebrating, with a massive but mostly empty freeway. The downtown skyscrapers stood tall and strangely forbidding as they passed by. Believe it or not, this thirty-year-old album captured what I was feeling.

Why don't I listen to Christian Music again?

As I hit the I-5 freeway connector from the 101, one of Larry's greatest tracks, "I Am A Servant," came on. I have to say: I got a little misty. There's a sincerity to the song that is heartbreaking – it's the confession of a penitent and humbled fool, and I have always been able to relate to it. With ease. It brought to mind every shortcoming of the night, and then the week, and so

survive the cut? Or was there a "cut" after all? At some point, had I just closed up and not let anyone new through the door? Was I unfair in doing that?

Questions worth asking, and I believe the answer is just under the surface here.

After some quality time revisiting the old jams I was ready to dive into the now considerable pile of brand new CDs stacked on the floor near my desk in my spare bedroom. (Still sounds really weird to call a bedroom, "my office." Sounds silly.) It was time for the Modern Era to get some airplay. I had all these impressively packaged CDs at my fingertips and I was ready to be amazed. Believe it or not, I was actually optimistic. Unfortunately, within a day or two I got... bored.

It was nothing spiritual, really – I didn't have any

the first two and was already familiar with The Fold's material. I enjoyed some of Demon Hunter's *Storm the Gates of Hell*, but I already owned that one and though I respected what was happening artistically, much of it wasn't my style. I'd been hearing about mewwithoutYou for quite some time and felt like a total idiot for being so unfamiliar with their material, but I can now say that I am a fan, and that *Brother, Sister* is a great listen. Mindy Smith and Allison Krause were not only already favorites of mine, I wasn't sure if they qualified as "Christian artists" in the spirit of this project. Same could be said for U2.

Anyhow, each of the bands I've just mentioned showed range and personality – I could relate to each of them in different ways. The songs seemed sincere and to have history behind them... but the majority of the rest of the music just kind of, "rolled out there and went...

"I can't imagine being encouraged in the sense that we are encouraged by music made by anyone other than us..."

on. I got to thinking about wasted time and wasted opportunities. Ah, Larry. Missed you, brother.

By the time "One Way" rolled around, I was singing at the top of my lungs and honestly fighting back tears. The simple reminder, "One way, one way to heaven. Hold your heads up high. Follow – free and forgiven... Children of the sky" was enough to make a jaded old punk rocker like myself cry like a baby.

The album held some serious nostalgic weight for me, but what I was relating to was more than that: These songs conjured legitimate feelings. The songs brought up actual emotions. They were emotions that extended well beyond nostalgia – they touched on the loneliness of the world outside my window, the harsh reality of life, the elation and relief of being reminded that Jesus still loved me. The songs were a reminder that in the end, everything was going to be all right.

I felt like this was an important thing to notice – a clue to the answer of the question I've been asking: Why don't I listen to Christian Music? More on that later.

Over the course of the next week or so, I looked back at some of my other favorites. Over The Rhine's *Good Dog, Bad Dog* was still in the iPod, as I'd always loved the imagery and mood the music communicated. "Go down easy, baby. Go down... slow. Take all the time you need – we've no place else to go." Melodies like that, with lyrics like those, would always have a place in my life. I would say the same for Sixpence None the Richer's, *This Beautiful Mess*. Pigeon John can make me laugh and cry on any one of his albums. It occurred to me that I might not be the right guy for this article after all – turns out I still listen to these albums regularly. I just didn't notice because the music was so much a part of my life that it just... fit in. How did these artists

revelation for good or bad. I listened to the music; I read the lyrics. I started in on the CDs the way I would have for any new music, but for the most part, I just didn't feel anything.

No connection.

Problem is that the truth about music and its effect on me is pretty simple: after one or two songs, I can typically tell if I'm into whatever I'm listening to. If I like it, the music spins longer. If, after one or two songs I'm surfing the web, reading Entertainment Weekly, or catching up on phone calls – chances are I'll never listen to the music again.

It wasn't all bad. In fact, I did find a couple bands that I felt a connection with immediately. Unfortunately, the majority of the music in my possession just didn't do anything for me at all. I have to say that a solid ninety-five percent of what I heard went in one ear and out the other. Some of it was down right embarrassing – there were "Christian Alternatives" to everyone from Marilyn Manson to Avril Lavigne. How is it that we've made so little progress in the originality department? I felt like we were back to the early 90's, when everywhere you looked, there was a Christian "adaptation" of a popular t-shirt or band. (Anyone remember the "Corona" T-shirt that said, 1st Corinth. 6? So witty!) Not only were so many of the bands somewhat unoriginal, they just didn't seem authentic. Why was that?

Again, there was that hint. It was taking some form now... coming up from underneath my slow wits...

// by Maylene and the Sons of Disaster, *Rival Factions* by Project 86, and *Secrets Keep You Sick* by The Fold were standouts from the big batch of music, although I suppose that's kind of cheating. I've played shows with

plop." (~thanks, E.A.)

The truth is that as I write this, I want to remember more of those other artists... I just can't. So very little was revealed, so little was risked. The songs had all the authenticity of an in-flight movie or an abridged book. There seemed to be a lot of posturing, but very little conviction. There was something missing from most of the rest of it for me, and thinking back to my Larry Norman Re-Visited Experience, I had a pretty good idea what that was.

Very little of what I heard (brace for the comy) moved me.

For me, music is about experience. I attach moments to songs – experiences, encounters, etc. I play songs as if they are part of the soundtrack to the movie version of my life, and if a song captures a feeling or an emotion particularly well, it's going to end up a permanent fixture in my life. The thing is, most of the music I listened to for this project did very little for me in that regard.

Sure, if I'm pissed off about something, there is plenty to go around from the Christian music bin. (To me, that's a little... weird.) There's plenty of screaming, plenty of helicopter-chugga-chugga guitars – plenty of angst and vitriol. Assuming that all of this frustration is pointed toward the world or sin is simply naïve – I get that. Yes, life is a pain. Yes, people tend towards sucking. I think it's healthy to let off a little steam when life leans toward the negative. But trust me, there is no shortage of relevant groups ready to fill the needs of those of us who have just about had it. I appreciate that entirely – in fact, a large portion of my own music has been written from that perspective – but what do I listen to the rest of the time?

I tried to place myself in situations, to remember if I'd ever listened to any Christian bands in the way I listened to the rest of my music. Turns out, there were some, but I had to really work hard to remember them. A few: I remembered going to work at one of my many jobs in one of the many places where I worked with many difficult people, dreading one of the many the days ahead of me. So much spiritual weight – I felt like I was jumping down into Sodom and Gomorrah to scrub toilets – had me heartsick and ready to turn around and go home. I happened to have just loaded up P.O.D.'s Testify, and I was listening to "Strength Of My Life" with guest vocals by Matisyahu. That song got me through plenty of those days.

I remembered waiting in the van with Stavesacre, just about to play some crap show at a crap venue. All of us were feeling... crappy. We were praying while Plankeye was on stage in the club, but we could hear their music outside. Neil, our guitarist then, was praying when the song "Break My Fall" came wafting into the van – not a dry eye in the bunch, believe it.

These are great examples of how Christian music is easily relatable to people going through difficulties and life's harsh realities, but again: What do I listen to the rest of the time?

I'm sure there are bands out there that I've missed – bands that would speak to me in the same way an Over the Rhine or even a Larry Norman would. But, who's got the time for all that sifting and searching? If it's good enough, I'll hear about it... right?

(Okay, we don't have time for an apathy sidebar.)

Maybe we as Christians and Christian artists need a refresher course on writing music for the soundtracks of today.

And now I see it – the answer is fully formed, and has emerged from the deep end.

For me, most Christian Music is incomplete.

It doesn't touch on all the possible emotions. Secular music doesn't either. I can't imagine being encouraged in the sense that we are encouraged by music made by anyone other than us. It doesn't cover all the emotions and circumstances, but it covers a lot more of them.

In the difficult times, Christian music is the only kind of music that can really bless me. If I'm pissed off and want to punch somebody, the Christian Music industry can provide me with the soundtrack to letting off steam. I can listen to some of it when I'm feeling joyful. But... what about the days I feel like going out and causing trouble with my friends? What about when I want to be romantic with my wife? What about when I miss her? What about when I'm driving down Sunset Boulevard and thinking that if I just got my act together, I might be able to do something other than what I'm doing now?

The questions can keep coming, of course. The fact is most Christian Music is difficult for me to place into my life's soundtrack. There are some exceptions, yes. But in general most of the music I connect with – music that takes me away or makes me feel creative – is not played by Christian people. Why is that? Is it because we are incapable? No – as I've said, there are some exceptions. So what is it?

I'm ashamed of the Gospel! (Just kidding. Seriously.)

I think it's just that, for me at least, we haven't quite gotten there. Or maybe... we were headed there but got sidetracked. We stopped making music for the soundtrack of people's lives and got too complicated – we got a little too wrapped up in our own world and forgot about the other one. Maybe we stopped being controversial to anyone but ourselves. Maybe we stopped taking risks that people outside of Christendom can recognize. Y'know – maybe.

Back when Larry Norman was doing his thing, he was controversial and he took risks, but I don't think he did it for any other reason than it was just what he did. Ultimately, he just wrote about every day life. He wrote the soundtrack.

When he wrote about Jesus it wasn't to avoid getting in trouble for being ashamed of the Gospel – he was just writing his life. I'd like to think that he did because he felt it was his responsibility as a Christian to not only follow his convictions, but also to try to be great. Sometime between then and now Christian Music got bigger and spread out further.

Maybe we lost sight of the art and got more concerned with contemporary Christian Culture. Maybe we went back to stamping "Jesus" on pencil erasers, and we didn't even realize it.

Sounds pretty boring. In think that's a good enough reason not to listen to Christian music for me – I can only imagine what the world outside is thinking.

So: What did I learn from my thirty-day fast?

I learned that I actually do listen to music made by Christian people. In fact, I really love some of it, I'd just forgotten. Imagine that. I just so happen to listen to the good stuff. (tee hee) In fact, I'm enjoying a playlist of it, right now – a month and a half after my thirty days was up. (Sorry, Doug.)

I also learned that I never want to go back to the pencil erasers. I want to write the soundtrack.

How about you? Would Larry approve?



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HM BACK ISSUES: READ 'EM WHILE YOU CAN



#114
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MxPx
Every Time I Die Says
TFK
Robert Randolph
Damien Jurado
Headphones
History of C.Rock
History of C.Metal
History of HM mag



#130
The Myriad

As I Lay Dying
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The Chariot
Symphony in Peril

PARTIAL LIST OF AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES:

#082 Mar/Apr '00 **PAX** 217, The Appleseed Cast, **Chevelle**, Wyrick
#088 Mar/Apr '01 **Zao**, Luti-Kriss, **The Brothers Martin** (yes!), The Alarm, FSF
#091 Sep/Oct '01 **P.O.D.**, **Dashboard Confessional**, DA, One 21, Embodiment
#098 Nov/Dec '02 **Blindside**, Dream Theater Says, **Embodiment**, Lost Dogs
#104 Nov/Dec '03 **The Ugly Truth Behind C. Rock**, J. Cash, BRMC, **Thursday Says**
#108 Jul/Aug '04 **Demon Hunter**, Antestor, **Zao**, Cool Hand Luke, Boys Night Out Says
#111 Jan/Feb '05 **Comeback Kid**, Showbread, Anberlin, **Taking Back Sunday Says**
#112 Mar/Apr '05 **Norma Jean**, Extol, Starflyer 59, **Eisley**, Far-Less, Scorpions Says
#113 May/Jun '05 **As I Lay Dying**, Still Remains, **Mae**, Copeland, **Fall Out Boy Says**
#115 Sep/Oct '05 **Blindside**, Mortal Treason, John Davis, **Project 86**, The Locust Says
#116 Nov/Dec '05 **No Innocent Victim**, Demon Hunter, **My Chemical Romance Says**
#117 Jan/Mar '06 **P.O.D.**, **Zao**, **Maylene...**, Underoath poster, Sevendust Says
#118 Mar/Apr '06 **Thrice**, The Classic Crime, The Violet Burning, **Collective Soul Says**
#119 May/Jun '06 **Underoath**, Project 86, Danielson, **Bleeding Through Says**
#120 Jul/Aug '06 **Dead Poetic**, Emery poster, **Zao**, Madball Says, Brandtson
#121 Sep/Oct '06 **Norma Jean**, Showbread, **mewithoutYou**, Buckcherry Says
#128 Nov/Dec '07 **Demon Hunter**, Emery, **TDWP**, Chris Cornell Says, Spoken
#129 Jan/Feb '08 **Thrice**, Pillar poster, **Korn Says**, Inked In Blood, A Plea for Purging

Album reviews

29 ALBUMS 63 ENTERTAINMENT 62 BOOKS & GADGETS



Rating system

- 05 CLASSIC
- 04 FABULOUS
- 03 SOLID
- 02 SUSPECT
- 01 AMISS
- * 1/2

P. O. D. *WHEN ANGELS AND SERPENTS DANCE*

Welcome back, P.O.D. It seems I haven't heard from you in awhile. I know you released a self-titled record back in 2003 (and I feel like there were some other releases in there along the way – I couldn't honestly say I paid attention for many of them), but it seems we lost touch along the way... It's great to finally hear from you again.

I've been listening to your newest release, *When Angels and Serpents Dance*, and I have to say that it was much better than I had expected. Given your last full-length official release, I have to be honest in that I wasn't expecting much from you all. Nothing against your guitarist replacement Jason Truby, but when Marcos Curiel left the band, it seems like you all hid under a rock and put out music that was very typical.

It's good to see that Curiel's finally back! This being his first record back with you all, it seems a little more like the infamous P.O.D. that held *TRL* on lock and had legions of fans chanting, "We are the youth of the nation." I can't say every song on the record is incredible, but I did find myself singing a couple after stepping away from the record for a while.

One of those was "Shine With Me," and though it's not technically your first single, it seems inevitable that if the initial track "Addicted" (which is less catchy and more rock oriented) doesn't hit, your melody-driven "Shine" will be able to fill the gap that people are looking for. "It Can't Rain Everyday" falls in the same melodic vein, while songs such as "God Forbid" (that features Page Hamilton from Helmet) can still keep the rocking feel to the album going.

It's cool to see you brought in other friends, too, like Mike Muir (from Suicidal Tendencies), for a song in a tribute to your home state of California. It's too bad the best part of that song is the break down; the chorus seems a

little juvenile for a Grammy-nominated band. I suppose it was also inevitable to also bring the Melody Makers (your reggae boys that usually back up Ziggy Marley) for the token reggae-feel song, and this one feels much better, more like you're in your element.

I can't say I'm obsessed with the record you've released, but in comparison to your glory years, you've definitely managed to channel those sentiments and put out a record that has the potential to have people say, "That's the record I expected P.O.D. to make" – in a good way.

[COLUMBIA RECORDS] DAVID STAGG



SHOWBREAD

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Showbread is a band that consistently pushes the musical and thematic limits of their listeners. The band crafts a compelling mish-mash of post-hardcore and screamo, and then forces their fans to think harder and deeper on an array of dense topics (what other band name-drops Kafka and Plath on the same record?). Thus, when the band names their new double-disc album after "a serious disorder in eating behavior primarily of young women in their teens and early twenties that is characterized especially by a pathological fear of weight gain leading to faulty eating patterns, malnutrition, and usually excessive weight loss" (from Merriam-Webster.com), something must be afoot, as this is a disorder not to be taken lightly. And the men of Showbread haven't done so: this is an intricate album that swings between blistering progressions of power chords and swooning, straight-up rock. Intermixed with the art-rock aspirations are the pulsing synths, sound samples, and engaging vocal techniques the band's fans have come to love. Both *Anorexia* and *Nervosa* are 12-track albums, each containing the same 12 metal-sounding titles – "The [insert strong, epic noun here]" – ranging from "The Vulture" and "The Flies" to "The Goat" and "The Death." Sonically, *Anorexia* is a natural progression for the band: the intensity of *No Sir, Nihilism Is Not Practical* merged with the passion of *Age Of Reptiles*, but with *Nervosa*, Showbread has created an aggressive, industrial sound that calls to mind the heydays of both Nine Inch Nails and Rob Zombie. Moreover, the band has seemingly upped the thematic ante here with a collection of strong songs laden with overarching ambition as they discuss fear, angst, tribulation, self-loathing, and eventual victory over the darkness. Showbread enthusiasts will find much to love with *Anorexia Nervosa*, while fans of elaborate album storyboard concepts will be giddy with the material that the band has packaged (including a story in the liner notes to be read along with each song). Has Raw Rock become High Art?

[TOOTH & NAIL] ADAM P. NEWTON



SANCTUS REAL

WE NEED EACH OTHER

The growing pains are in the rearview mirror for Sanctus Real, the Toledo, Ohio radio rock act with a penchant for interjecting inspiration between memorable riffs. *We Need Each Other*, their fourth studio album, reveals a full line-up (with two new members) and a focused, mature sound. "Whatever You're Doing (Something Heavenly)" reveals an inner obsession for Leeland, while the heaven-focused "Lay Down My Guns" serves as this album's "I'm Not Alright" with Mark Hammett's passionate vocal overtop aggressive balladry. It's the best entry in the band's catalog thus far, although it's not far from what you'd expect.

[SPARROW] MATT CONNER



DELIRIOUS?

KINGDOM OF COMFORT

Anger is not often associated with the worshipful Delirious?, but it is the most common emotion on the righteously angry *Kingdom of Comfort* CD. Vocalist Martin Smith is undeniably ticked over the church's widening materialistic comfort zone, which especially comes through loud and clear during this disc's title track. Along with its vertical (praise) to horizontal (rebuke), Delirious? has also added new shades to its musical Crayon box, as Stu G. intensifies "God Is Smiling" with a memorable Lindsay Buckingham inspired electric guitar solo. And the overall mood is more Radiohead dark than U2 bright. "We Give You Praise," however, is an example of the act's more familiar praise style. The only clear misstep is the TV commercial slogan-like "Give What You've Got." Even so, Delirious? mostly wears its anger well.

[CMG/EMH] DAN MACINTOSH

A THOUSAND TIMES REPENT

VIRTUE HAS FEW FRIENDS

From the second A Thousand Times Repent dropped the first note on their debut EP *Virtue Has Few Friends*, I couldn't stop until I had listened to the whole thing. They've managed to take death metal and put a new spin on it, with ingenuity in their songwriting and a knack for creating songs that engage the listener. The first track, "Curses! Another Shape-shifting Wraith" immediately drags you in – kicking off with what would normally seem like a breakdown for later in the song – before ATTR punish you with some intense guitar work and a wonder for where the band is going to take the song. The whole record doesn't stop there, even in the parts where they slow it down for the ladies. If their full-length proves to be anything like this EP, I'll be the first in line to buy it.

[TRIBUNAL RECORDS] DAVID STAGG



UNWED SAILOR

LITTLE WARS

If you need some level of categorization, you can safely place Unwed Sailor on the lighter end of post-rock instrumentalists. Johnathon Ford and company seem content creating minimal, brighter fare compared to many of their heavy-handed contemporaries. And after a decade together, the latest LP, *Little Wars*, only continues the trend. "Copper Islands" sets the tone with a Montreal indie piano progression before Sailor's dual guitars kick in. "Aurora" is a shorter composition with cymbal crashes and heavy riffs forming a chaotic subterranean while lighter harmonic guitar tones light the way ahead. "Nauvoo" is the longest piece on *Little Wars*, deeply rooting itself in subdued acoustic pop structures and never allowing heavier synth winds to blow it too far off course. Unwed Sailor occupy a niche within a niche and they fill their slot well. *Little Wars* is a buoyant post-rock effort and a nice addition to the band's discography.

[BURNT TOAST VINYL] MATT CONNER

Ratings

	DV	Writer
P.O.D. <i>When Angels And Serpents Dance</i>	04	04*
Showbread <i>Anorexia Nervosa</i>	03*	04
Sanctus Real <i>We Need Each Other</i>	03	04
Delirious? <i>Kingdom Of Comfort</i>	03*	03
A Thousand Times Repent <i>Virtue Has Few Friends</i>	03	04*
Unwed Sailor <i>Little Wars</i>	04	03
The Human Flight Commitee <i>Oh, When The Animals Unionize</i>	03*	03*
Map <i>Regrets, Silhouettes, And Distractions</i>	03	03*
Run Kid Run <i>Love At The Core</i>	03	03*
We Shot The Moon <i>Fear And Love</i>	03*	03
Soul Embraced <i>Dead Alive</i>	04	03*
Starfield <i>I Will Go</i>	03	02
The Famine <i>The Raven And The Reaping</i>	04	03*
Kingston Falls <i>Armada On Mercury</i>	03*	04

THE HUMAN FLIGHT COMMITTEE

OH, WHEN THE ANIMALS UNIONIZE

True to the title, the album begins with an assortment of animal noises amidst ambient droning. What follows is a debut effort full of off-kilter, spastic, syncopated punk riffs that occupy a space somewhere between Emery and mewwithoutYou, only more raw. The vocals show potential when delivered in sing/speak/yell fashion (think Mark Salomon doing his best to mimic Aaron Weiss), while a couple attempts at more straight-forward singing fall a bit flat. Some of the lyrical analogies are a reach, such as the use of "apocalips" and "apocalipstick" in two different songs, but the guys do a decent job channeling Refused on the impressive "She's a Car Destroyer." Some of the experimenting may just need a little fleshing out and a dose of focus, but as debuts go, this isn't half bad. If nothing else, THFC deserve major props for aiming at a more unique sound, rather than simply adding to the glut of flavor-of-the-month screamo-core acts that grows each day.

{BLUE DUCK}-TIM HALLILA-

MAP

REGRETS, SILHOUETTES, AND DISTRACTIONS

Hailing from Southern California, Map creates a feelgood album with relaxed melodies reminiscent of a coastal drive. Their compelling music reminds the listener of waves viewed from the road crashing in high tide. Fifteen songs comprising two out-of-print EPs and five new songs, *Regrets, Silhouettes, and Distractions*, sound so brilliantly indie, one could be torn between holding onto this gem secretly or telling every ear who will listen how amazing this new Map album is. The record stands as a cohesive unit rather than four good songs interspersed between seven or so fillers. Pairing that with neat reverb laden lyrics, consider this recording a relevant one to pick up as soon as you can. For the fresh Map fan, these songs are all brand new. For the seasoned ... the remixed sounds offer a raised eyebrow of content.

{VELVET BLUE MUSIC}-JONATHAN HARMS



RUN KID RUN

LOVE AT THE CORE

Clinging onto a not-so-long ago era when pop melodies replaced punk mentality, Illinois natives Run Kid Run returns with their second album, titled *Love At The Core*. Acting as a pure sequel to their self-titled debut, the songs reliably deliver energetic rock bursting with endorphins (if Mae ever decided to speed things up, they might come close to an imitation). While some may say this sound carries a dorky or geeky vibe, but when it comes down to it, is there anything wrong with that? Didn't think so.

{FOOTH AND NAIL}-DAN FRAZIER-



WE SHOT THE MOON

FEAR AND LOVE

Jonathan Jones (formerly of Waking Ashland's new project is an honest dose of good pop-rock ... to say the most. All the right ingredients are there for an exceptional piece of "I rock hard in girls' clothing pie:" upbeat guitars, popping percussion, melodic keys and dashes of wah-ooh and ooh-wah throughout. The album contains strong worshipful tracks like "Hope" and "Sway Your Head," and incorporates three tracks from their EP *The Polar Bear And Cougar*. Beautiful keys accompany Jones' earnest and raw vocals in "Tunnel Vision," while "Please Shine" is probably the most moving and sincere ballad on the album. The music remains fairly light throughout, but the times it picks up seem almost inappropriate. "LFTP" conveys brokenness and humility, but it's contrastingly expressed through an upbeat and almost happy tempo. Dan Koch and Joe Greenetz of Sherwood lend their talents to support Jones' project, but the result, though not bad, is merely another cliché pop-rock album.

{THE MILITIA GROUP}-HALEY GLASCO



SOUL EMBRACED

DEAD ALIVE

Rocky Gray and company return with *Dead Alive*, the first full-length album from Soul Embraced in five years. Despite the somewhat lengthy spans of time between albums, Soul Embraced pick up right where they left off. After a tranquil introduction consisting of a piano and acoustic guitar, the brutality kicks in and sounds oh-so-familiar. This is both good and bad; fans of the band will almost assuredly enjoy *Dead Alive*, yet one could arguably expect further progression or refinement of the music of Soul Embraced. Breaking the music down further reveals songs that are more lead guitar-rich, along with a heavier emphasis on the modern death and thrash metal sound of bands like Arch Enemy. Standout tracks include "Breaking Point" and "A Curtain of Deceit." This album definitely won't disappoint.

{FOOTH & NAIL}-CHRIS BECK



STARFIELD

I WILL GO

Note to Starfield: Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Thus, the mind is a terrible thing to waste, particularly regarding worship. But worship songs are rarely witty or wordy, so if Elvis Costello ever gets saved, we're all in trouble! Of course, praise music need not be judged merely by word or wit count. Nevertheless, it ought to be intelligent and unique. (e.g. the *City on a Hill* series). Starfield rocks out on "All We Need" and wisely paraphrases Isaiah on its title track, but it also spouts endless clichés - like "Holy Is Our God" - the rest of the time. Sadly, this Starfield inhabits too finite a universe.

{SPARROW}-DAN MACINTOSH



THE FAMINE

THE RAVEN AND THE REAPING

Embodiment was one of the best bands of the late 90's/early 00's. Their debut *Embrace The Eternal* never did much for me, but sophomore outing *The Narrow Scope Of Things* is one of the best albums of the last eight years. The only problem was the band changed their sound quite a bit from album to album, eventually ending up with a pure hard rock sound that turned old school fans away. Enter The Famine. Ten years after Embodiment appeared on the scene, Kris McCaddon (vocals), Andrew Godwin (guitar), and Mark Garza (drums) have reconvened under a new moniker. Nick Nowell completes the line-up on bass. *The Raven And The Reaping* could easily have been the follow-up to Embodiment's debut oh so many years ago. From frantic opener "Scar The Earth" to the technical groove of "The South Will Rise," the band has certainly returned to their roots. Godwin lays down a great Southern tinged guitar solo on "Cut From The Stone," and Garza's drumming is insanely intricate as usual. McCaddon's vocals are more understandable than the last outing these guys had together. This is brutal stuff. The songwriting isn't as chaotic as it was 10 years ago, but that's a good thing. Production courtesy Andreas Magnusson (The Black Dahlia Murder, The Agony Scene) is leaps and bounds above the members' previous output together, too. For those who were turned off by the changes Embodiment made in such a short tenure, The Famine is sure to satiate your appetite for aggression. As you read this, the band is about to embark on a tour with Demon Hunter, Living Sacrifice, Oh Sleeper, and Advent. Don't miss out on the groundswell, kids.

{SOLID STATE}-CHAD OLSON



KINGSTON FALLS

ARMADA ON MERCURY

Kingston Fall's album *Armada On Mercury* opens with a symphony fading into a battle march drum procession entitled "The Christening." The intro track presets the album into a state of pride and duty, but most of all: hope. Vocalist Nate Lambright sings, "It keeps us living," on the inspirational song "The Contentment," while making apparent the album's overall concept - intentionally or not. Made up of all the right hardcore and metal elements (double-bass drum pedal, shredding leads, growling and gang vocals), the songs still can't be easily written off or categorized within either genre. What makes them stand apart and soar is their uncanny, uplifting cantor and pure hard rock drive.

{FACEDOWN}-DAN FRAZIER



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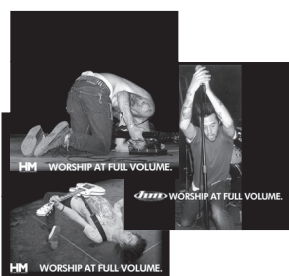
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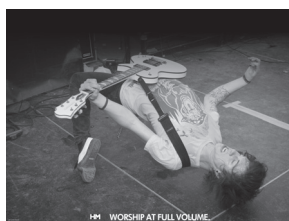
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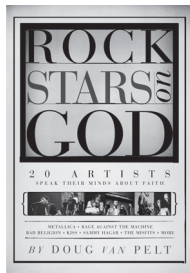
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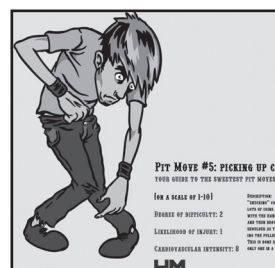
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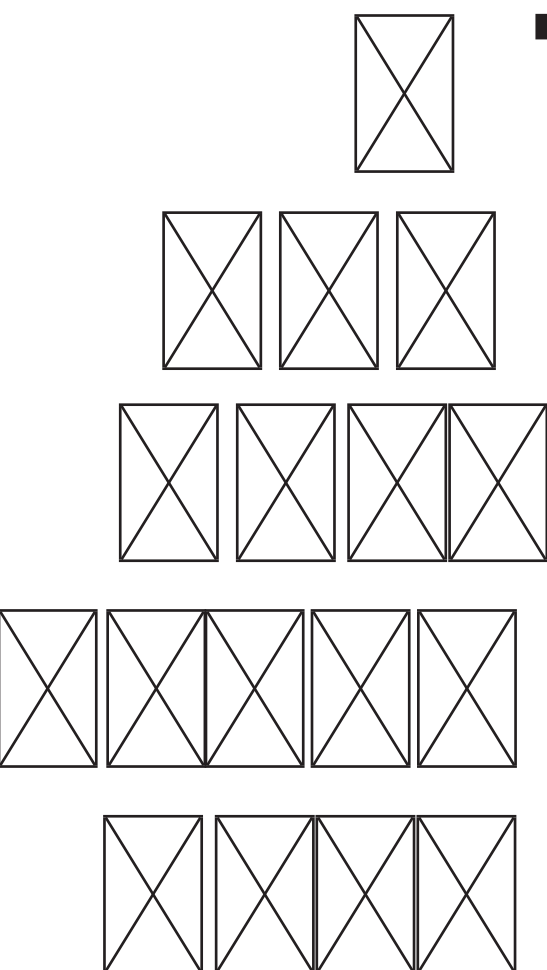
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TO ECUADOR WHILE

SHOWBREAD MISSION TRIP '08
BY JOSH DIES

There's this rotund, writhing grub trapped between Mike's index finger and thumb.

"It's strong..." He observes, sounding surprised. Our group, gathering closer now, begins encouraging Mike to eat the grub. Standing in the dining room of the Welch family house, I realize that Mike is going to eat the grub, and that he would have done so without anyone other than himself suggesting it. The creature in question, about the size of a double A battery and twice as thick, is the color of orange soda, with a dark smudge of brown for a head. It goes on squirming between mike's fingers with these liquid, gesticulating movements.

"Welcome to Ecuador," Mike says into my camera.

Then, he's biting down, pulling on the body of this grub, trying to work the head away from the trunk. When the work is finally done a thick rope of translucent green comes leaping from Mike's mouth and pooling up into snotty globs in the Tupperware tray where the head is still rolling about in languid locomotion.

At this point, it feels almost like being on tour. My friends are here, Mike is entertaining us by doing things normal people will not do, everyone is laughing. The weight of this trip won't seize me until the final evening, and this is only the first day.

A year ago, I was standing in the streets of Kolkata, India. And like so many other missionaries before me, I thought: 'How selfish and ignorant I have been...' When we returned to the states, my brother Patrick looks to us and asks: "Well, where do we go now?"

A year later, I'm watching Mike eat a grub in South America. We'd been planning, raising money, and praying about this trip



Photo: Myrtil Santos Kayda



for twelve months, now we're here, it's happening, Mike is eating a grub.

We've come all this way to work at Casa De Fe, an orphanage in Shell, Ecuador home to a multitude of children with varying degrees of special needs. Looking at these kids on the Internet, they've got no toes or they're heavily scarred or malnourished, I had entertained a predictable amount of pity for them. Now, standing in the middle of the orphanage, two kids go whizzing past me pushing a little boy named Martin in a wheel chair, whose face is buried in some kind of chocolate ice cream pop. A group of girls team up on the DVD player remote control to figure out how to make Shrek play in English for the Gringos. The women who work here at the orphanage are laughing and running behind these kids, keeping the building from collapsing. It's practically a zoo of excitement and joy. Not at all the stoic, solemn place we expected.

By day, I'm playing the "20 questions" or "Connect The Actors" with Mike and Patrick at the work site. Our voices broken with grunts as we hack through foot after foot of dense vegetation, we're clearing the area to make way for new facilities for the orphanage. Across a shallow creek, Matt and Travis are helping Craig Welch build walls for a storage shelter. A lot of time passes, Patrick tells everyone he has made it to the halfway point,

Mike complains that this round isn't fair. Juices from inside the plants I'm hacking go soaring through the air as I chop through with my machete. Some drops land on my lip and I wonder if I'll get sick. After a while, everyone is strained from racking their brains over this round, we beg for it to end. I ask Craig what the plans are for the area, and as he explains building after building, I realize the work set out for us during these two weeks hardly scratches the surface of the work that is to be done. Physically and financially, there is a long way to go before the kids have a new place to call home.

When 5pm comes, and Craig Welch tells us we better head back for dinner, I turn and see huge areas once riddled with greenery, now cleared and vacant, waiting for a building that will eventually be another zoo of happiness and clamoring children. Somewhere in my head, I'm thinking that what I'm doing at this moment matters, and that God will be happy with me, that my life has earned more tallies of worth, that I'm slightly less of a selfish, spoiled, ignorant American. It won't be until later that night that something in my subconscious sings when I realize that I've made this trip about myself. The next day, we take a break from all our machete work to visit the orphanage. While we connect actors and shower ourselves with jungle dew, the girls in our group have been

exhausting themselves with children whose batteries never deplete. Stepping into their world now, I see the simple and profound joy leap from the children to the girls on our team. They scamper about, swinging the kids in the air, laughing as small teams tackle and overpower them. As soon as someone from our group steps into the room, several children rush to them, embracing them with immediate and unconditional acceptance, the same kind they have been shown by their creator.

"These kids don't have anything, and they're happier than we are" Mike laughs.

A girl named Tatiana, who was found, beneath her parent's home, living and eating with the dogs, sidles up next to my wife on the couch. Tatiana catches a glimpse of a necklace looped around my wife's neck, and lifts the charm to her face. Sealed in cheap, Ecuadorian plastic is a tear shaped image of Jesus. I watch as Tatiana stares at the charm, her jaw crooked by an underbite, face slouching.

"Who is this?" My wife asks, pointing at the image staring out of the charm. "Is this Jesus?"

Tatiana lifts a finger to touch the small portrait, thinking only in the small, simple way her brain will allow. Then, looking up to my wife, she speaks the name of the one who, with a depth unrealized by Tatiana, has cherished her with adoration more profound than any cosmic mystery I will ever consider. In this small moment, in His very presence, the name of Jesus on Tatiana's lips becomes the most beautiful thing I will hear during our time in Ecuador.

When the final evening in Shell, Ecuador arrives, an American missionary comes to debrief our group.

"The thing about short term missions is this" he begins "If you were to simply send us the money you spent to come on this trip, could we have done more with it? Absolutely."

Though he expounded on the importance of the life changing experience one is almost bound to have on third world mission trips, and though my faith that our year of praying for this trip was in line with a clear and perfect vision set fourth by God Himself, the first thing the man mentioned haunted me. Sitting in America, with all my possessions and all my blessings... with my wife by my side and my dog and my comic books and DVD's and nightly can of ravioli, does it take me traveling across the world to realize how dark life outside of my ivory tower can be? The experience we all had in Ecuador was no doubt appointed by the most High, but do I need that experience every year to remember my selfishness? If more can be done with several thousand dollars by sending the money rather than spending it to send myself, which is more for the widows and orphans and which is more for me? I'm realizing now it isn't for me to decide.

The requirement, so far as I can see it, is obedience. To be obedient often leads one across the world, far away from any familiarity or creature comforts. Other times, a life of blessing renders a man or woman someone "To whom much has been given," immediately afterward however, "Much is expected." Thus, blessings fill a man's hands before obedience empties them, and as the riches spill from a man's hand, so they gather in his heart.

To assist physically or financially in the wonderful work being done in Shell, Ecuador through Casa De Fe please visit: lacasadefe.org & valeriegrace.com/support.html

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Payable on Death

REUNITED AND IT FEELS SO GOOD...

Sitting down on the phone with freshly shorn frontman Sonny Sandoval for a series of questions about the reconciliation of this very public feud revealed that it was almost as natural and matter-of-fact as anything else the band has put their hand to. Perhaps it was the very unnatural act of a musician's onstage murder that got the ball rolling. In fact, it was in the wake of Dimebag Darrell's murder that Curiel reached out to his old bandmates.

"We happened to all be in Palm Springs writing the record, and it was the first time we really had a conversation," explains Sandoval. "It kinda just stemmed off of, 'Hey dude, I'm trippin' how something like that could happen.' He was just kinda reflecting on all of us and what we've been through, you know, playin' those clubs. So, he reached out that way." Drummer Noah Bernardo Jr. (aka Wuv) had been the first to connect with their former guitarist, with something as simple as his nephew playing football with one of their nephews in the hood. After a relaxing hang with Wuv, Curiel asked, 'Hey, do you think ... I'd really love to talk with Sonny and Traa. Do you mind if I give them a call?' Wuv said, 'They'd love to hear from you, man.' And thus, an organic connection was restored.

"He called me out of nowhere," explains Sandoval, "and I was talking to him, and it wasn't even about music, it was like, 'Wow, years have passed and our relationship has gone downhill.' It was more of how we were doing and what's going on with everybody. One of the things that he just came to me was: 'I've just been thinking about you guys a lot, and obviously I've done my stuff and my things with this other band,' he said. 'But dude, I really want to inspire again with our music. And I know that even through our differences and maybe even, you know, different opinions and we've grown even in different ways, you know... But, I know that P.O.D. always had a gift for inspiring people, and I miss that.'

"I said, 'Bro, you said it best, aside from the dirty rotten sinners that we are and all the mistakes that we make ... Still, with P.O.D., God is continuing to shine and move a lot of people, and that's been evident for all the years that we've been together. And it's a comforting feeling; it's a good feeling knowing that there is something bigger than just us four.' But, man we just had a good talk and he said, 'I would just love to get with you guys, and hang out, get lunch.' We set a lunch date and we just hung out, man.

"And the crazy thing is that in the meantime, you know, we were going through stuff with Jason. He just really wanted to be home, but at the same time I think he was having a hard time telling us that he didn't want to be away from home and

go out on the road anymore. You know, it was time to start writing a record that would take a lot more time away from him and home. But, nobody knew that except us, because we had already had a conversation with Jason. We told him, 'Dude, we are about to step into a new record. You've just got to be upfront and let us know what you want to do, what's best for you. It's not even what you want to do; it's what you should do.' He actually came to us and said, 'Dude, I think I just need to be home, with my family.' You know, we never said that to Marcos, nobody knew any of that. But, we just started to hang with Marcos. Getting to know each other ... and sooner or later we just kinda worked our way back to our little studio, and (laughs) he's just showin' us guitar riffs and stuff like that. And then we kinda let him in on what was going on. So, we just took it step by step. We just said, 'Hey, let's just jam, man. We'll just try to get back in the groove, just like old times,' and we just started doin' that – just started hangin' at the studio everyday, eatin' lunch together, goofin' around, just like before. And that's pretty much where it went, dude."

While reconciliation and peace-making are foundational and natural byproducts of following the teaching of a carpenter that rose from the dead a couple of millennia ago, one has to wonder about the perceived "elephant" in the room created by Curiel's internet statements and musical output with fellow disillusioned Pete Stewart (fka Grammatrain's frontman). Would Payable On Death continue with its simple focus ... or reflect some sort of democratic process that valued spiritual diversity?

Now the age-old question of "Are you a Christian band?" seems to take on new meaning. Whereas Sandoval used to grip his mic with passion and speak for the entire band, now he's wading through new territory, careful just to enunciate for his own heart. "I'm not saying that we disagree ... 'On a level of, say 1-10, and we are at a 10.' No, it's not even disagreements; it's just directions in which life takes you. It's really kind of taken us to a place where it's like, 'Hey, you know what, let's just make sure ... you know here we are, and this record is taking a long time and the process and we are going through so many things. Let's just agree right now, that without God this band is nothing, without God being the focus of our lives first, without Him we cannot take another half a step forward without Him. So, knowing that and believing that God is Master over our hearts and this band, let's just allow Him and let's do our part to try and draw as close to Him as we can, so that when it comes down to decisions and when it comes down to the directions that we need to go and the choices we need to make, that at least we can agree that God is at the center, and that we can go from there. God is going to work it all out.' We understand

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that it's like... 'Hey, we all know that God is in control and that we are not, so let Him take control.' So, it's just been a whole year, I think of us just kind of trying to find that place again individually – and not so much as a band and as this is what we have to do. It's more like, 'Hey, find that place where you can connect with God the way you should and draw close to Him and it's gonna work out.'"

One thing that's followed P.O.D. around (or any band of faith that's made serious inroads into the mainstream, for that matter) is the tension with legalism and expectations of fellow "family" members. It's reared its head in lyrics like "Anything Right," which left both Sandoval and Blindsides guest vocalist Christian Lindskog gasping for breath in the vocal booth; and the song "Asthma," as well as again on this album with "Condescending." When given the hypothetical chance to gather all his agitators in one room and speak these lessons to them, Sandoval answered: "The Bible says to be of one heart, one accord and one mind, you know what I mean? When you read Acts, when it talks about how the Spirit came over the disciples and stuff, it was saying how instantly the Spirit hit them. Instantly they had everything in common ... because it was about Jesus. It didn't matter the status in life, who they were, how cool they were, financially, you know, where they grew up ... they all had everything in common. It was because they believed in the most important thing and that's when they recognized it. 'Dude, this is God Almighty here, this is the Messiah that we have been waiting for. This is eternal, these are spiritual things.' But yet, ever since then, it's like ... my travels around the world and you meet so many different people, and it's like, 'Wait a minute, you say you are a Christian, I thought I was a Christian, but we don't have anything in common. The only thing we can say is that we believe in Jesus. What does that say to the rest of the world looking in on us – that we can't even get along? Why would anybody want to follow a God that is Lord of all this confusion apparently, and King of all these followers that can't get along and are fighting, and that see things a million different ways, and disagree on almost everything?' It's frustrating, man. And, as young believers, you go through that. And a lot of times, aside from having to worry about the things of the world trying to distract you from your walk with the Lord, you have to worry about people that say they are Christians or say that they are your brothers and sisters and yet they judge you the most and push you aside the most and make you feel inadequate and not worthy to follow God. You know I've seen it, I'm not just saying that to say that. I've felt it myself. I always felt like I wasn't worthy to walk this walk, but then I go through my own personal struggles, but then when you can't match up to everybody else sometimes you just get to that place, and I've seen people get to that place, and it's just like, 'I give up. It's just too hard.' And they don't continue."

#

Not to be ignored in significance, however, is the quality of the band's new music. While the self-titled album was a test of survival; and *Testify* was a world-class attempt to claim the relevance and stature that *Satellite* had catapulted them to; this album comes

at a time where Payable On Death better deliver the musical goods or they might fall off the musical radar forever. The iTunes-dependant music consuming culture outside is not long on forgiveness and reconciliation. If the music doesn't move them, they're one click away from another band that will. While there might not be a hit as large as "Alive" for this band, as alluded to before, this album is hitting on all cylinders and no excuses are necessary. These four old friends have proven that blood is thicker than water and that nobody makes music more real than the family bonds of a band tested by years and years of beat up old vans and small, smelly performance conditions.

"I wish I could say that it was this top secret thing, but it's just Marcos pluggin' in man, and saying, Dude, I'm gonna feel this piece right here."

From the opening punchy riffs of "Addicted" to the jamming fury of "Kalifore-eye-a" and the hardcore-ish "God Forbid," the rhythm section of Curiel, Traa Daniels and Bernardo are in sync like a groove machine that should never be turned off. They show their diversity with the obligatory power ballad, "It Can't Rain Every Day" and the hypnotic mid-tempo pace of "Shine With Me" and the confident yet earthy tones of "I'll Be Ready" (which would make a guitar master like Carlos Santana proud).

Of those big, powerful yet laid-back tones, Sandoval grins that it's just kinda, "One of the things that usually tend to come out when you are playing mellow music. It's like one guitar, one track, you know, a nice big open sound. (You) throw some things on it in the mix, and then, 'Wow! That thing is huge.' That's Marcos' guitar. He's got his sound, and he's got his style. I wish I could say that it was this top secret thing, but it's just Marcos pluggin' in man, and saying, 'Dude, I'm gonna feel this piece right here.'" While one might not call this vibe a "guitar secret," it is safe to conclude that it's an exclusive thing, because you can't purchase that kind of feel in some Line-6 bank of guitar effects.

Having players this good at every position, it almost makes you wonder why P.O.D. invites others to the party, but the result is always amazing. This album features musical legends like Mike Muir of Suicidal Tendencies and Page Hamilton of Helmet, who both bring the intensity level higher with their presence. And yet the members of P.O.D. (rock veterans working on their fifth major label release) get all giddy like kids when crazy talk and ideas turn into reality when someone who knows someone makes the connection and in walks the SoCal icon with an oversized bandana. "Dude, this is probably the biggest one for us, man. We always talk, just because we're fans of music... We are like... 'What if Sting gets on our track, what if Bono, what if Bjork?' Or, you know... 'Call up Lenny Kravitz!' Just crazy stuff. It's just all talk, but we had written a song and did that cool little punk break in the middle and it was like, 'Dude, what if we got Mike Muir doing 'Suicidal?' Not ever thinking in a million years that he would. Same thing with Page Hamilton – not ever thinking that they would. We kinda just threw it out there and caught his number somehow, and I just called him

and told him what a big fan this band is of his, and how influential he has been – not only to us, but to music today, and how much we respected him.

"We said, 'Hey man, we are going to be out in LA, we got this song that we would love for you to hear and see what you think.' He was actually going out to Australia for a time to do some shows out there, but he's out there in Venice, we are out in North Hollywood. I said, 'Dude, if you want call me when you get back and let's just hang out, come by the studio, it would just be cool just to kick with you.' We had met him a couple times out on the road,

but he knew of us, he remembered us, he dug our stuff. He came out and we let him listen to it, and we said, 'Dude, if there is anything on your end that you're feeling that you want, I would love to interact with you on the verses and definitely the bridge is all yours, you can do whatever you want to do.' And, he was like, 'Cool man. Yeah, give me a copy and I'll check it out.' He was so busy doin' his stuff when we finally got to that song that I was like, 'Dude, are you gonna do it or not?'" (Sandoval laughs recollecting his merciless treatment of his own hero).

"He came late, late that night, and I was like, 'What did you write?' And he was like, 'I didn't write anything.'

"Alright, cool. Then we're just gonna, like, freestyle, we are just gonna jam it.' I pretty much had the verses, and he was like, 'What do you want me to do?' I said, 'Dude, just listen to the song, I just want you to do your thing. I want you to be Psycho Michael from Suicidal Tendencies and do your thing, man. Back me up on this.' And we did that, he just did a million things. We have so many takes of him doin' all kinds of cool stuff. At some point and time you've got to nail it down and pick and choose what's the best. As far as the verse goes, he took a little piece of paper and sat right there by the mic and wrote it down real quick and recorded it. It was just awesome, dude; and he was cool. I know I said this before, but I always heard this thing from one of my friends, and he said 'Dude, never meet your heroes, you know?' (laughs) But it's not true. It was just so cool and an honor to be around him. He murdered that track, dude. We will be forever grateful."

Like any album in this crazy industry called the music business, the end results of mad success or near missing is now out of the artist's control. What they did have in their control was trying to write and deliver the album of their careers. If it were a competition with other bands and I was one of those other bands, I'd be intimidated with *When Angels & Serpents Dance*, because this team has brought its A-game. When it comes down to just being a listener and audience, of this we can all be grateful.





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LARRY NORMAN
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Sho



EXERCISE IN FEARLESSNESS: SHOWBREAD'S ANOREXIA NERVOSA

IF YOU TAKE RISKS IN ROCK MUSIC THESE DAYS, YOU MIGHT AS WELL SIGN YOUR OWN DEATH CERTIFICATE AS A BAND. THAT IS BECAUSE MUSIC HAS BECOME DRIVEN BY THE PREDICTABLE, THE MUNDANE, THE UNINSPIRING, AND THIS INDUSTRY HAS BECOME UTTERLY DESPERATE FOR JUST ONE THING: SALES. WE ARE DEFINITELY IN A BEAR MARKET, WITH LITTLE END IN SIGHT. WHAT HAPPENS IN A BEAR MARKET, WITH BECOMES THE MOTIVATING FACTOR IN ALL THINGS. AND FEAR IS THE DRIVING FORCE IN MUSIC TODAY.

showbread

BY ANDREW SCHWAB

So, is it a coincidence that fearlessness is what it takes to create something inspiring, something memorable? If you take just a few moments to examine the latest work of Showbread, you will find that "courage" is just the tip of a very ambitious iceberg. *Anorexia Nervosa* is one part double-album, one part literary work, and all parts a parable about the human soul.

And. It. Is. Fearless.

I took a moment to catch up with my friend and vocalist Josh Dies recently to discuss this, Showbread's life work.

You all had a very grandiose vision for this upcoming album, your third – *Anorexia Nervosa*. First of all, talk a bit about the concept for this opus...

The concept is actually split into two separate albums. One album tells the story of a woman named *Anorexia* who opens a center for sick and dying children. The other album tells the story of her sister, *Nervosa*, who works at a strip club/slaughterhouse called the 120 Days Of Sodom. Inside of each album is a ten-chapter story. The way the album works is you begin a track, and then simultaneously read the corresponding chapter along with the music. When both albums begin, both sisters make a decision about how they are going to live their lives. *Anorexia* believes she will find meaning in making herself this iconic symbol of virtue, while *Nervosa* feels that she will find meaning indulging in any pleasure the world has to offer. So, both albums begin with a song called "The Journey," where that decision is made, and from that point you, the listener, take that journey with each of the characters. So *Anorexia Nervosa* isn't really an album you pick up at Best Buy and just jam in your car... It can be, but it really is meant to be taken in a dark room, alone, listened to on headphones at maximum volume while you read along with a small reading light.

Where did you get the inspiration for the album?

When my brother and I were kids we had these storybooks from the movie *Gremlins* and they came with little vinyl records that kind of read along with you and had creepy sound effects. I always thought that brought out another dimension to the reading, made it more of an experience. Somehow that came to mind when I was brainstorming the new album and I

thought, 'What if we essentially write the score for a written story instead of a movie?' Literature has always been the most powerful medium to me, as you go on a journey of the mind so to speak, so I wondered, 'What if we wrote the soundtrack for that journey?'

From that point I started to pray for a vision for the story, and God told me the story of these two sisters. God breathed the idea into life and then guided it from conception to completion. This album is 100% a story and message handed over to us by God.

Musically, the story goes through some horribly dark places during the journey. So we wanted it to have a sound representational of the places it finds itself. We listened to rich, orchestrated albums like The Flaming Lips' *The Soft Bulletin*, concept records that have amazing seamlessness like Genesis' *Duke* and Nine Inch Nails' *The Fragile*. Then we opted to combine the kind of lush, organic vibe with a very harsh and ugly brutality, so we drew musical influence from albums like Marilyn Manson's *Hollywood* and Nine Inch Nails' *The Downward Spiral*.

Musically this is the most rough, jagged music we've done as well as the most sweeping, lovely music we've ever done.

In a time in music where ambitious endeavors are frowned upon by the business end of the industry, this album seems very counter-intuitive (which is the beauty of it). What are your thoughts on how Showbread fits into this industry in its current context?

I'm not sure that Showbread fits into the industry at all. The beauty of this album and labor of love that it is came from Showbread learning that lesson. When we started this band it was because God told us to and he wanted to use it to show His love. When we released *Age Of Reptiles*, we had gotten to a point where record sales and agents and figures and labels and expectations really mattered to us, and we lost a lot of sleep over those kinds of things. Then finally... we got to a point where we finally remembered that none of those things were the reason we had a band in the first place. The only reason our band exists is because God commissioned it, and the only reason He did so was so that it could better His kingdom. As

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“Parables will always be the most profound method of storytelling to me, because Christ Himself spoke in parables almost constantly..”

soon as we lost sight of that one simple truth, we were humbled for a year straight.

This is what makes *Anorexia Nervosa* so beautiful. This is not to say that *No Sir*, *Nihilism Is Not Practical* and *Age Of Reptiles* were born out of periods where Showbread was “off” spiritually. Both of those records are very much the work of God as well. With *Anorexia Nervosa*, however, we were given a completely blank and incredible slate. Our sole purpose was making the record that God wanted us to make...

Musically and conceptually there is no doubt in my mind that this is by far the greatest work Showbread has ever done. Will it appeal to fans aesthetically? Our only hope for this record is that God will have His will for it accomplished, and we know that He will, so we are at perfect peace.

You recently took a little trip to give some aid to those in need in a foreign land. Tell me about that experience.

We went to Shell, Ecuador to work at the Casa De Fe Orphanage, a place for orphans, kids with special needs, or just kids who need a place to stay. When we got back from India last year with Faceless International, we said to each other, “Where do we go now?” So we started praying and our friend Sarah from Faceless helped us organize a trip to Casa De Fe.

Showbread fans actually paid for us to go. If you gave us a dollar or some change or whatever on tour in our “Missions Fund” jar, you literally paid for us to go. We had a great time and the trip had a big impact on everyone that went (these kinds of trips always do)...We’re just grateful to be privileged enough for God to allow us that trip. We know it’s nothing special we did, we just followed His lead and were amazingly blessed by it. Raw Rock Missions is going to be planning trips like this every year... or

maybe just saving up every year to help the missionaries who are already out there.

Speak on George Romero’s Influence to what you guys do...

I saw *Night Of The Living Dead* ten years ago; I was 14 years old. I went into it just to be able to say I’d seen *Night Of The Living Dead*, since the name itself is so iconic. But then watching it, I was completely enthralled. The film was made in the 60’s and the lead role is a black man (who slaps a white woman!). These people, holed up in this house, they just couldn’t get it together, they ignored the problem and start killing each other without the zombies having to do anything. Then, the ending... I was literally speechless. I had never seen such a profound horror movie, let alone one from that decade. I started to research Romero and learned that’s just what the guy is known for. Not only did he invent the modern zombie sub-genre, but his movies are never really about the zombies. They’re about racism, consumerism, war, revolution, politics, media... How brilliant, I thought, because this man not only invented a modern movie monster, but he uses them to talk about something far greater, whatever it may be in that particular film. The allegory is a powerful thing, whether it’s *The Chronicles Of Narnia* or *Day Of The Dead*. Parables will always be the most profound method of storytelling to me, because Christ Himself spoke in parables almost constantly. Social satire has been a part of Showbread songs for a long time... Sarcastic songs, like “Pachycephalosaurus” or “So Selfish It’s Funny,” easily fall into this category. With the song “George Romero Will Be At Our Wedding,” we kind of tip our hats in a “Thank You” to George by using his iconic cipher (the zombie) to tell a story that is at the heart of everything that Showbread does, which is the love and forgiveness of Christ.

Josh, you wrote a novel not too long ago.

I read this, as you know, and it gave me nightmares. Talk a little bit about your goal with this book, and give a little summary of the plotline...

The Spinal Cord Perception is basically the story of a guy named David Rivers, who is having a hard time making sense of his life and what might be real; as opposed to what might be in his head. When I wrote it, I was really burdened by a need to write a novel, so I just drew from my favorite authors and – for better or for worse – out it came. The thing is, since the book is so dark (and gave you nightmares), I was worried that people would overlook the glimmer of hope in the story, since it is so overwhelmingly bleak for 300+ pages. When my wife read the first draft she said, “I like it, but it is going to make people throw up and think you’re crazy.” I was shocked and humbled by the way people responded to it. So many people have been touched by the message of hope in the book; it really is amazing. A lot of people seemed to enjoy it and I was really happy with the way it came out. What I’d really like to do is get the book a mainstream publishing (deal), but that is a full time career in and of itself and I haven’t had the time to dedicate to it. When I go back to literature, it’s to write, not to shop the book. I’m working on a second novel now called *Nevada*, which is really an undertaking for me, because it’s so much more vast in scale than my first book was, but I’m really excited about it.

What’s a “Llapaslally?”

The Llapaslally, I think, is the physical manifestation of the darkest part of the human psyche, or something like that. For David Rivers, his Llapaslally got to a point where it controlled his life (if it wasn’t in his head). I’d hate to see your Llapaslally, Andrew.



To Uganda, A BLOGGERS' TOUR with love

BY DOUG VAN PELT

There is a problem in Uganda. 30,000 children die each year under the age of five. One million Ugandans are living with HIV. There are a million orphans due to AIDS. Malaria is an epidemic in the country and is its leading killer. Poverty is deep and widespread. Compassion International is an organization that is addressing the problem. In an unprecedented experiment, they invited a group of 15 bloggers to come to Uganda and see their work firsthand. I was blessed and honored to be numbered amongst those 15. Our stories are online [compassionbloggers.com], but here is a (very) condensed version of mine.

If you've ever attended a large Christian music festival, you are probably at least somewhat familiar with Compassion Int'l. The Colorado headquartered organization is used to these sort of third world trips, but this one had a few distinct differences. Instead of a band or an artist touring some projects where children are served, it was bloggers – artists of a different kind. And instead of a songwriter telling his or her audience about it a month or two down the road at a concert date or in a new song, we were blogging about what we saw and touched within 24 hours of experiencing it. And, while it smelled like a missions trip, it didn't exactly feel like one: We weren't going to dig a well or build an orphanage. We were going to see and blog. It was like a diverse group of journalists covering a war – a war on poverty. I was prepared to swing a hammer or push a shovel, but instead I was asked to walk, talk, hold, and touch. What we saw ranged from brokenness or sadness to joy and gladness.

Day One:

We visited our first "Project." Part of Compassion's personality is that it works with nationals (almost every single Compassion staff person in Uganda is from there) and with local churches. Like any big organization, they love abbreviations, nicknames, and acronyms. A "project" is really a church. Compassion doesn't build buildings, re-invent the wheel, or hang signs that announce, declare or brag about their work. They find someone that's doing effective work and support and finance those places to do it better. We visited a church in the slums of Kampala, where children came in on Saturdays after a week of school for healthy food, education, practical vocation training, and spiritual edification. Public school in Uganda isn't free. Compassion often covers the school fees for Children in their program. No one ever gets coerced to convert to Christianity – children of all faiths are helped equally – but they will hear the great story of Jesus. We met young children that told us their dreams of being: a doctor, an engineer, a nurse. They had hope in their eyes.

Next we visited a couple of homes of children in the program. Did you ever have a friend growing up that never or rarely invited anyone over, because they were ashamed? I wondered about this as we visited a small shack that served as a house. Outside were about half a dozen kids, a couple of men, and a small fire with a kettle over top. Ducking into the small room revealed two small benches, clay walls, and a hanging sheet that separated where a woman and her husband slept and the uneven but packed dirt floor that her six children slept on. This was where the trip became interactive. I was sharing the space of a closet with three project workers, this woman, and three other bloggers. It was almost suffocating, but eye-opening even in the dark, unlit room.

Later that day we went to a project that specialized in Compassion's Child Survival Program (CSP). This place provided help for at-risk children and pregnant mothers. I played soccer with several young boys as a small group of cattle wandered by outside. We were able to bond a little and bring smiles with bubbles, candy, and other gifts. It's cool how "play" usually transcends language barriers. Some of these kids burned me bad on the makeshift soccer field, dribbling right between my slow feet.

Day Two:

We visit a more remote project away from Kampala. The bus ride is a rambling one once we departed from the paved roads. There were a lot of children and we had lots of play time with these youngsters, as well as several moms that sat nearby doing crafts. We visited some more homes. It's humbling how much the people

honored us by inviting us in. We saw first-hand what a project worker will do in checking up on the health of a child.

Day Three:

This was like three days in one. We started off by visiting the MildMay Centre – a huge complex that administers outpatient care, dentistry, education, medicine, and other health services for those with HIV and AIDS. Men, women and children come from all over to get help here. The facility was obviously built and runs with love and care. We toured the facility and said hello to a few children in the children's station, who were getting treatment and looked like they weren't feeling too well. When my wife explained to one person in the bus the basic differences between HIV and full-blown AIDS, she also shared how young children with AIDS usually don't make it due to not having enough of an immune system to fight off an "opportunistic infection." With almost a collective sigh, most everyone on the bus realized at once that the children we'd waved at would probably not be alive for too long. It drove home the dark reality of the suffering they were dealing with here on a daily basis.

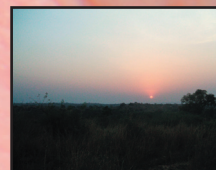
The bus took us to a hot Chinese restaurant called Fang Fang. It was here that many of us had the life-highlight experience of meeting our sponsored child. From all the way across the globe and over the equator we were face to face with the little 8-year old girl that we sponsor. It was a mutual joyfest as we spent time getting to know each another. Our girl's mother was with us and a project worker provided translation (Most of Uganda speaks English, but Luganda as well). As with anyone else that we met that was even indirectly involved with child sponsorship, they let us know how profoundly grateful they were for our help. Compassion's main thing is Child Development, and we got to see it from many angles.

Later that night we got to meet several "graduates" from the Child Development Sponsorship Program (CDSP), who were enrolled in the Leadership Development Program (LDP). These are young men and women who exhibit great leadership potential. They are sponsored in another way (\$300 a month) that pays for their higher education. The leader at our table had been neglected by his step-mother, many times not getting fed each day, whose only nutritional sustenance came from his weekly Child Sponsorship activities. Some Compassion sponsor literally saved this guy's life. Now he's giving back, having started an alumni association of other formers-sponsorees. Many of those familiar with the program predict that it's just a matter of time before a Compassion child becomes Uganda's President. Judging by the quality character we conversed with that night, I think we might have met that person or persons.

So, Uganda has a multi-faceted and complex problem. Compassion Int'l not only has a workable solution (not the *only* solution, mind you), but an incredibly well thought out solution. It's hard to explain how profoundly impressed I was to see the big picture. Compassion helps rescue pregnant mothers and provides children with pre and neo-natal care (with their CSPI); they help children develop into healthy young men and women (CDSP); and then helps those with the most potential to become leaders of integrity with a servant-leader mindset. This is not only service-unto-Jesus in action, this is excellence in action, man!



Photos (clockwise from top): DVP self portrait on Nile River; Sophie aka BooMama; safari sunset; St. Thomas Primary School kids; entering a small home; Charlotta Van Pelt's bubbles evoking joy; boys eating all-sustaining porage (photo©Keely Scott); school mottoes (©KS); lounging lions (©KS); noble husband & officer; Shannon & sponsored child (©KS); a beaming Anne Jackson (©KS); Chris+Randy Elrod+sponsored child (©KS); David Kuo (©KS); CVP+Rhodah (©KS); Shaun Groves in awe of African safari (©KS). Background photo©KS.



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"It sounds like he made stoner music for Christians." This statement, made by a newly christened underground celebrity named Andrew Beaujon (suddenly notable for his authorship of his outsider's perspective on Christian Rock, *Body Piercing Saved My Life*), stopped this editor in his tracks. He was asking questions on the phone for a well-deserved tribute piece he'd been asked to write for the Bob Guccione-owned publication known as *Spin Magazine*. I was explaining how Larry had woven all sorts of gems, puzzles and inter-twining storylines from album to album in both lyrics and liner notes.¹ While a slightly blasphemous statement for many of his evangelical fans, it kind of hit the nail on the head as far as describing the kind of care and thoughtfulness that went into each studio project Larry Norman presented to a hungry fanbase. It was almost the perfect compliment to an artist whose vinyl still fetches small fortunes and provokes rabid discussion and gushing praise. Who else (in a Christian music industry he sort of accidentally helped pioneer) delivered iconic album covers that even bothered to compete with the Hipgnosis album cover pieces of art adorning recordings by Led Zeppelin or Pink Floyd? No one before him or after him really ever came close.

One possible explanation? Larry simply got it. He wasn't a youth pastor that grew his hair out long or purchased second-hand bell-bottom jeans to "fit in." He was simply an artist that understood parts of his culture and attempted to communicate with it. Holding up Jesus and Christianity's bold assertion of exclusive truth emboldened other believers with an interest in music to follow. The pages of the magazine you are now holding and all the CDs or digital audio collections of 1's and 0's stored on a portable device nearby would not be here if it wasn't for this guy. Some dispute his claim, but at best the popular vote has determined that he's the first long-haired musician to hold a guitar and loudly proclaim that "Jesus is the Rock, and He rolled my blues away."

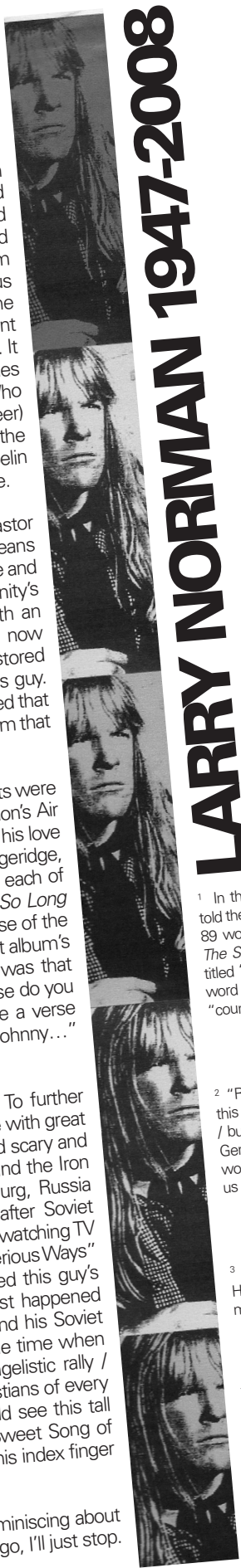
As skilled as he was at song composition (I mean, how many artists were assisted by George Martin for two consecutive albums in London's Air Studios?), his penchant for great art was probably more linked to his love for great literature. He championed writers like Malcom Muggeridge, Francis Schaeffer and G.K. Chesterton. This might explain how each of the three albums of his great trilogy (*Only Visiting This Planet*, *So Long Ago The Garden*, and *In Another Land*)² ended with the last verse of the last song on each ending with the very words that made up that album's title. Genius stuff. What's great about Larry's music, though, was that he didn't stop there or put all his attention in one area. How else do you explain his willingness to record lyrics like "I don't really have a verse to go here, so I'll just let the band play it one time. Play it, Johnny..." (referring to his long-standing six-string sidekick, Jon Linn)?³

An artist has got to be confident to make moves like that. To further broaden the man's legendary status, he did more than dabble with great music and remind the church to care for the poor. He also did scary and dangerous things, like touring and performing concerts behind the Iron Curtain. I remember getting sick while visiting St. Petersburg, Russia (the original name reverted back from Leningrad shortly after Soviet Communism's fall) in 1991. With nothing else to do, I tried watching TV in my isolated hotel room. Besides seeing videos for "Mysterious Ways" by yet another big-time artist that's publically acknowledged this guy's musical influence, I turned to some state channel that just happened to be running a documentary on Larry Norman's music and his Soviet tours. It's hard to forget little details like that; as well as the time when I was just 9 years old and attending some sort of evangelistic rally / concert in Dallas called Explo '72. With over 200,000 Christians of every shape and color mostly sitting down on the grass, I could see this tall singer with long, bleach-blonde hair singing a "Sweet, Sweet Song of Salvation" and flashing an iconic "One Way" salute with his index finger pointing at the sky where he now resides.

Like many of his fans, this writer could go on and on reminiscing about Larry Norman. But like his heart did about two months ago, I'll just stop.

—Doug Van Pelt

LARRY NORMAN 1947-2008



¹ In the song "Nightmare #71" (*So Long Ago The Garden*, 1973) he told the story of a talking marionette that came alive and "spoke exactly 89 words." Then, some 8 years later (1981's *Something New Under The Sun*), he sang the phrase "89 is really 99" in the song ironically titled "Leaving The Past Behind," which mysteriously explained the 10 word discrepancy for those that actually took him up on his cue to "count 'em."

² "Reader's Digest" ends with the line: "Don't ask me, I'm only visiting this planet." The song Nightmare #71 fades out with: "I beg your pardon / but we left it oh so long ago, the garden." And "Hymn To The Last Generation" leaves the listener with lots of reverb in the apocalyptic yet worshipful ending of: "Stand beside us / take His hand / He will guide us / in another land."

³ In the infectious 'n' gritty blues ditty known as "Put Your Life In Into His Hands," which sounded like it could've fallen off the Rolling Stones mobile studio truck around the time of the *Some Girls* sessions.

⁷⁷⁷ Larry left us with a terrific catalog of tunes. While most agree that his creative peak was early 70's, he kept showing his mad songwriting skills into the mid-80's, like "Woman Of God" (released as a studio recording on the rare *Rehearsal 4 Reality* and as a live cut on the easier-to-find *Stop This Flight*) and the tongue-in-cheek jab at John Lennon with "God Part III" (*Stranded In Babylon*) in the early 90's. Near the end of the 20th century, I was as pleased as punch when I was able to talk him into recording a cover of dcTalk's "Jesus Freak" for HM's *The Mother Of All Tribute Albums*, where I was both honored and pleased to feel that I'd somehow been able to tap into his creative process for that one. For the near future, keep your eyes peeled for future tribute albums, including from surprising sources like Frank Black of the Pixies fame, as well as those from his inner circle handling his vast musical vault.

Kevin Max

USING BLOOD AS A FOUNDATION

BY DAN MACINTOSH



→ **K**EVIN MAX'S NEW CD, *THE BLOOD*, CONTAINS SOME OF HIS BEST MUSIC EVER. IT'S ALSO A UNIQUE PROJECT, IN THAT THESE TEN SONGS HOLD TOGETHER RELATIVELY WELL THEMATICALLY. FOR THE MOST PART, THIS WORK CENTERS AROUND JESUS AND THE BLOOD HE SHED ON THE CROSS FOR MAN'S SINS. IT OPENS WITH THAT OLD STANDBY, "THE OLD RUGGED

CROSS," AND CONCLUDES WITH "ONE WAY-ONE BLOOD," THE DISC'S LONE MAX ORIGINAL COMPOSITION. THE REST OF THE CD IS COMPRISED OF COVERS, WHICH RANGE FROM OLD HYMNS (LIKE THE AFOREMENTIONED "THE OLD RUGGED CROSS"), TO MORE MODERN MATERIAL, (EXEMPLIFIED BY PRINCE'S "THE CROSS").

Max also called upon a few famous Christian musician friends to help track these songs. He is joined by his fellow dcTalk mates for “The Cross,” Amy Grant and Vince Gill for “Up above My Head I Hear Music in the Air,” and Erica Campbell (Mary Mary) for the old Impressions’ classic, “People Get Ready.” The presence of such familiar Christian personalities seemingly makes it clear that Max is still committed to making quality Christian music.

“I’m committed to the Christian listener, absolutely,” Max affirms. “I just wouldn’t consider myself committed to the Christian industry. Not because they haven’t been committed to me; I just don’t see them doing anything really cutting edge or really pushing things forward. It’s just been such a musical ghetto to me that I’ve never really been interested in it, ever since I decided to make my own music back in 2000. The truth is I never wanted to exclude anyone from listening to my music. So when I made *The Blood*, I wanted to make a record that actually was going to be sold into the general market as well as the gospel market. I really didn’t look at it as my reentry into CCM at all. That’s what everybody’s trying to say about it. And I’m kind of, like, trying to tell people, ‘No, that’s not what it is. This is me being able to do a side project that I’ve wanted to do for years.’ I’m never going to tell anybody they can’t pick up my music. If I can continue to make music, even in the general market field, I’ll still sell back into the Christian music industry, because I think listeners are listeners, wherever they are.”

Asking Max to choose any one favorite song on this new release is a little like trying to persuade a father to pick just one favorite child. Nevertheless, he speaks like a proud parent when describing one particular tune. “‘Trouble In The World’ is probably the one track that I did where I said, ‘Okay, I’m really proud of that,’ taking that from point A to point B. I was really happy where that went,” he explains. “But I look at this project as a whole project. It’s not a bunch of singles. In my mind, it’s more of a concept piece than it is a bunch of singles that I’ve decided to do. And obviously, there’s only one original thing on there – “One Way-One Blood” – which I wrote specifically for this project. I look

at it from the start to the end as one big, long song; one big ode to gospel music.”

As for the work’s celebrity guests, a couple of folks initially advised Max to have his friends lend a hand with its creation. “One was the label,” Max explains. “The other was management. And both of them thought it would be a smart idea for me to kind of call on some of my more well known friends within the industry to be part of this. At first I kind of resented that, and I really thought, ‘I don’t need to call a bunch of people to sell a record, because this isn’t about me; it’s about the songs.’ I didn’t want to set this up as another vehicle for Kevin Max. I want to pay homage and I want to respect these old songs. But as we started making it happen, Joanne Cash was the first person that I chose, because we did a show together at B.B. King’s. And I wrote this song (“One Way-One Blood”) for her and just thought, ‘It’s gonna be great to do this with Joanne.’ And as soon as that was kind of finished, we started bringing in other people for other tracks. Originally, I wanted Mary Mary to actually sing background on all the songs, just because I love their vocals and I thought that would bring more of a real purist kind of gospel feel to it.”

Eventually, however, geography eventually played into the ultimate sound of *The Blood*. “We kind of shifted it a little more toward roots, a little more country, because we’re in the middle of Nashville and the opportunities to have those kind of players just coming by was a lot easier than just pulling from L.A. I legitimately wanted more of the African American gospel sound on the record. But then we started kind of making this thing, it was, like, ‘Why try to do that when you’re, like, a white boy from Michigan?’”

Max’s decision to cover Prince’s “The Cross” was a particularly brave and rewarding one. There is this stereotypical public perception of Prince as being a highly sexed, eccentric artist, which is accurate – to a point – but also one-sided. But when he wrote this thoughtful song for *Sign of the Times*, he was able to meld the spiritual with the socially conscious in a way that was nearly perfect, making it come off like a modern day hymn.

“It’s more than a hymn to me, it’s kind of an anthem,” Max clarifies. “It’s very universal. Anybody that can really take the time to hear what the lyrics are saying, it’s very current as well. With all of the starvation we have going on in other countries and all the horrific diseases we have, that song plays even today as a very current song.”

When choosing the songs for this CD, Max had to be careful not to select works that may have already been overdone. So selecting Prince’s “The Cross” exemplifies his smart thinking in this regard. In other cases, he simply chose less familiar arrangements of fairly familiar songs.

“I had been covering ‘God’s Gonna Cut You Down’ by (Johnny) Cash and (Rick) Rubin on the road,” he says. “I wanted to do that initially; then I was, like, ‘I can’t do that, because too many people have heard that original version.’ So I went back to the original Blind Boys Of Alabama, ‘Run On For A Long Time’ version. Their version was more quartet-like, and I liked that – even more than I liked Elvis’ version of the song. Originally, I was going to do a gospel quartet song called, ‘Satan, Your Kingdom Must Come Down.’ But when the time came do song selection, I went with ‘Run On For A Long Time,’ instead.”

Max is already looking toward his next CD, which he’s tentatively titled *Modern Monastics*. “It’s basically about how we’re becoming so isolated as people,” Max explains. “On the flipside, it’s kind of call to become people – even though we’re becoming isolated – that can still reach out in every community that we’re in and try to help people as much as possible.”

But answers to the problems addressed on this next album can only be answered with the primary solution provided by *The Blood*, which is explained best with “The Cross.”

“We all have our problems / Some big, some are small / Soon all of our problems / Will be taken by the cross.” In other words, it all comes back to the cross; it all comes back to *The Blood*.



A LIFE ECHOED



THE BOY WHO CRIED

TRUTH

07.01.08



The
Locked &
Loaded
2008 Tour



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS



WELCOME TO THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF A NEW FEATURE IN HM; WHERE A BUZZWORTHY INDEPENDENT BAND SHARES THE SPOTLIGHT WITH THEIR DESERVING PEERS. THIS ISSUE OUR PURVEYORS OF YOUNG TALENT ARE THE LADS FROM **Sophia**

All the Day Holiday

One of the most creative and solid bands we have ever played with. Truly amazing guys who write truly amazing songs that we can't get enough of. Definitely one of our most frequently played in the van. They combine an ambient sound with amazing vocals and driving back beats to create a sound that is truly their own.

—Ryan Meyer (drums)



The Flood Memoirs

We first met these guys about two years ago in their home town of Lafayette, LA and they blew us away. Now we have both grown and changed alot, but they are definitely one of our favorite bands to play with. Formerly a hardcore band, they have undergone some member changes and are better than ever. They combine extremely creative riffs with fantastic guitar tone to create a sound that is all their own.

—Ryan



My best friend

and roommate is the only original member of the **Gunpowder Treason** so obviously we have an instant connection to this band. We have watched this band change and mature over the past two years and through all the changes they have continued to be perseverant. Their music continues to grow in musicality and technicality. This band is one you defiantly want to continue to watch out for.

—Keith Richards (guitar ... yeah, his real name)



the house in the hole in the side of the tree

is one of the most musically talented bands in Nashville. This trio's style of music is so technically brilliant, to pin them to a specific genre would be unjust. We met House at a show we played with them about a year and a half ago and we have watched them grow both as musicians and as friends. All of us enjoy this band, because of their talent and their hearts. House has so much passion in what they believe in that it is reflected every time they perform.

—Bennett Piispanen (keyboards)



Beyond the Citadel of coup de grâs

is a band of misfits hailing from Tucson, AZ. In high school, I played with these guys in a pop punk/emo band called Avondale in the suburbs of Phoenix, AZ. After we graduated I went to Nashville and they to Tucson. Beyond the Citadel, although may seem a bit rough around the edges, but more or less are some of the most genuine guys we have ever played with. Last summer we made our way out to the West Coast and played a few dates and it was by far the highlight of our tour. Their sound is as genuine as they are bringing life, depth, and fun back to hardcore.

—Steven Lefebvre (vocals)



LOOK

WHO'S ON TOUR

Anemic



myspace.com/anemic
rly: the used, city sleeps, the beatles

William Stenner



williamstenner.com
rly: rock, underground recordings, raw material

Neginot



neginotmetal.com
rly: sinai beach, killswitch engage, bleeding through

Heroes will be heroes



myspace.com/hwbbrock
rly: august burns red, as i lay dying, war of ages

PICK OF THE LITTER

Kemper Crabb

Over the Labor Day weekend in 2006 a film crew documented a performance of "Medieval Christmas Music," to which our illustrious columnist referred to as "the greatest hits of western music." While the DVD (complete with an on-camera interview conducted by this mag's editor) is held up in the planning stages (seems there are on-going talks of whether or not a certain public broadcasting system is going to air this and make it part of their fund-raising catalog), this audio-only disc shows forth sonic brilliance, clarity and mood. Fans of organic, multi-instrumental world music (from as far apart as, say, Allison Krause/Robert Plant to Caedmon's Call) need to digest the greatness that is captured here with Kemper and his musical stalwarts. While partly an acquired taste, there's enough cool instrumentation (mostly with percussion and various strings) that some instant gratification is quite possible. (Doug Van Pelt)

kempercraabb.net

Ives

This band delivers really beautiful, melodic melodies on their 6-song EP, *Themes*. The lead vocals are outstanding; but are supported by pristine instrumentation that is progressive and inventive enough to widen the scope of the appeal. The atmospheric expanse in the simple yet contemplative acoustic song "Find" reminds me a little of the artist in the movie *Once*. This band played at my church while I was gone to Africa, and when I was told that my mother bought one of their CDs and promised them a review, I rolled my eyes, had a sick feeling in my stomach, and expected the very worst. I am relieved, shocked, and overjoyed to report that Ives is a high quality band. (DV)

myspace.com/ivestheband

Those Lavender Whales

Aaron Graves has produced an oddly creative and fun album. The details are what make this album great – complete with bells, chimes, sirens, and chants of "oops" and "ouch." Simple acoustics and simple pleasures. (Haley Glasco)

thoselavenderwhales.com

SAWOL

Really good and extreme. Nice use of dynamics and slow, building crescendos before they get all hyper-speed and growly on ya. Too slow, gothic and doomy to be categorized as black or death metal, with lots of classic-metal hat tipping. (DV)

myspace.com/sawolmusic

Eldridge

These guys have a great sound! Tight screams, heavy guitars, powerful drums ... comparable to bands like Dizmas. I wouldn't be surprised if you were to see them in a feature article in a future issue of HM. They are definitely fighting their way into the rock scene (see myspace photo) and my bet is that they will come out on top. (HG)

myspace.com/eldridge

Beyond the Citadel of Coup de Grâce

This band with a long and strange name make some really nice music that pulls the listener in with divergent musical dynamics (call and response stuff, like singing/screaming, as well as discordant playing and tasty keyboard elements). The rhythmic throbs recall a strange love child of Project 86 and Atreyu. Very diverse, yet melodic. (DV)

myspace.com/beyondthecitadel

Athens

I'm a sucker for heavy, intense music like this. While not breaking new territory, the guitar blips, screaming, and monster grooves are certainly pit-inducing and you can't knock the screaming and guitar playing. (DV)

myspace.com/athens777

Gretchen Schmaltz

This acoustic gem (a 5-song EP called *Laced Up Tightly*) is very cool, slow and pretty – kinda like a cross between Rosie Thomas and Sam Phillips. (DV)

miakatempire.com

Alexander the Great

The lyrics are simple, humorous and relatable. These guys sing about everything from love to Thanksgiving, and they have a great time doing it. With upbeat guitars and stripped down vocals this band exhibits the true rawness and originality of indie music. (HG)

myspace.com/alexanderthegreatin

Polydream

Clear vocals are perfectly complimented by light percussion and powerful strings. The group's melodies are peaceful and extremely infectious. Sounds a bit like Coldplay mixed in with the musically aesthetic Explosions in the Sky. (HG)

polydreammusic.com

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Eleventh)

We have seen, in past installments of this series, that the failure of the millions-strong American Evangelical Church to produce any quantity of quality art (music, dance, film, architecture, etc.) is largely due to the lack of Evangelical understanding (much less action upon such an understanding) of the Scriptures, despite Evangelical profession that they believe the Bible to be God's Word, which directs Christians in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), which includes the making of art.

We have also examined what a deficient view of Biblical Eschatology (the doctrine of what God is shaping history toward, and of what His Purposes will accomplish within and at the end of time) implies for a theology of Art. We saw that such a deficient Eschatological view inexorably leads to a pessimism concerning history itself, and that such a pessimism regarding the Surety of God's Promises in time leads also to the conviction that the Created Order is Satan's realm, and that, since time itself is unimportant as an arena of change, personal, individual salvation (as escape from history and the world) is all that is important. This leads to escapist, hyper-individualist art.

We turn now to another artistic implication of a deficient view of Eschatology. The idea that God's Purposes will be defeated in history means that history is only intermittently meaningful, if at all. This non-Biblical idea leads those who believe it to devalue the concept of working and struggling across the passage of time to understand and work out an idea or to develop a work of Art, since the meaninglessness of time and the lordship of Satan over history means that anything accomplished in time (save perhaps for something that contributes to an escape from history) is worthless, having no true transcendent meaning.

This devaluation of the worth of struggle and working in time in turn causes the believer of this idea to value only those "instantaneous" creations of intuition, sudden insight, and so forth, as either works of internal genius or extra-historical "in-breaking" inspiration, so that works of Art (or theological concepts, or relationships, or the possibility of suffering as redemptive,

or the careful working out of the meaning of Scripture,) honed and perfected across time are not seen as meaningful or worthwhile.

This idea also sees as unimportant the Biblical concept of sanctification, of progress into holiness over time, including the possibility of an artistic calling by God contributing across time to the sanctification of the artist and his audience, and of thus fulfilling the performance of the "good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2: 10).

The abandonment of sanctification in time has led to a quest by many Evangelicals for a mark or proof of spirituality that instantaneously shows spiritual advance (such as a certain spiritual gift obtained all at once, or a pet doctrine adopted in short order, or even membership in a particular congregation, movement, or denomination), something which requires little or no time for development.

This same impulse has led many Christian artists to downplay the development of their song-writing, painting skills, dancing abilities, etc., in favor of shallow and inferior aping of popular or developed artists, all the while considering their work superior since it was "given" them from above without the necessity of temporal development... All of these things have contributed to the derivative, substandard body of bad art produced by the Evangelical Church of our day.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it

Chris Wighaman

I'm in a hotel right now. I USED to enjoy staying in hotels. I say I "used to" because recently hotels have been a target for those nightly news shows where they "expose" the seedy underbelly of what was thought to be safe and clean places to sleep. I watched a two-part series where they showed how the maids cleaned or, to be more precise, didn't clean the glass cups left in rooms. They showed them clean them with the same brush they clean the bathroom with; they showed them just dump the contents of the cup and put it back on the sink, and they even showed them spray toilet cleaner in them and give a quick rinse of the glass and called it good. They've run similar shows showing the uncleanness in just about every other aspect of the room [like the bedspreads – ummm, they are rarely washed]. It has really changed my hotel experience. This room that used to be kind of exciting to stay in has me freaked out because everything now feels dirty, and it probably is!

Matthew 23 has Jesus saying this to a group of people:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean."

Jesus isn't worried about their dishwashing hygiene, he is worried about their souls. These Pharisees took a great amount of time and energy to clean up the appearance of their lives and neglected to evaluate the inside of their lives. Jesus is confronting the "hidden" sins that were common among the Pharisees. This was not unique to the religious people of Jesus' day; it's just as common today. If some late night news show were to put a hidden camera on our inner thoughts, agendas, and motivations, they would find all too often that we have a lot more in common with hotel maids and Pharisees than we would like to admit. Many times Christians are quick to condemn the "obvious sins" of sex outside marriage, getting drunk, and violence. Greed, selfishness, lust, and unhealthy anger are ignored because they are more easily hidden. People of faith justify them as "not harming anyone" or just taking care of themselves instead of seeing them as the harmful sin that they are.

Jesus draws attention to this so that they and we will take a good, hard look at what is inside as well as outside. Then take the steps to allow God to clean both the outside and inside of sin that destroys our lives.

Devotions

with Aaron Tucker

"I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened."

—Mark Twain

I'm writing this from 30,000 feet on a United flight somewhere over Southern California, returning from one of my more creative adventures. To celebrate my girlfriend's birthday, I flew both of us to San Francisco for a day jam-packed with sightseeing, eating, walking, and just hanging out. Katie and I kissed under the Golden Gate Bridge, viewed Alcatraz from afar, and wandered through Fisherman's Wharf. We even rode a trolley car, and my nursing-student girlfriend seemed to love every part.

I, however, was less pleased.

Oh, the day was fine — perfect even — it was the easiest \$400 I ever spent. The flights are what left me disturbed.

San Diego to San Francisco is an easy gig — 30 minutes up, 30 over, and 30 for the descent — but even on a short run like this I can't escape the nagging thought that people can't fly. Tons of metal floating eight miles above the Earth's safe surface just doesn't make sense. Well-intentioned friends will quote statistics about flying being safer than driving. "Aaron, the odds are 1 in 1,000,000 you'll die in a plane crash." That may be true, but my unspoken reply adds, "But at least in a car, my fender bender won't lead to an eight-mile freefall."

A writer whose work I appreciate (with some degree of censorship) is Chuck Klosterman, and Chuck observes that the ratios and predictions we come up with usually don't mean much, since every occurrence in the known universe has a basic 50/50 chance of happening: Either it will, or it will not.

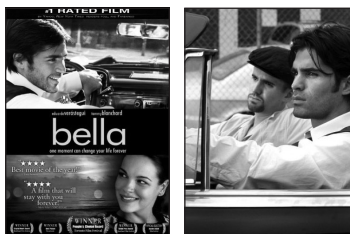
I think God appreciates that brand of simple logic, and as a result He gave two kernels of encouragement to worriers like me. First, in Matthew 6:34 He instructs us not to stress over a problem that may or may not develop to begin with. But then He adds a necessary promise in Psalm 121, saying, "Even if something DOES happen, I've got you covered." He even adds that He stays up all night to protect us!

So from the improbable plane crash to the real-life dramas that will cross our paths each day, we can trust that with God in charge, everything will work out for His best in the end.

[Visit Aaron Tucker at myspace.com/UrbanRescue]

Entertainment reviews

DVDS, BOOKS & GADGETS



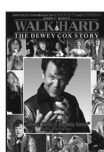
01 BELLA LIONSGATE

It's interesting to have two DVD titles that touch on the subject of adoption in this issue. This charming indie film shows two people grappling with the harsh realities of an unexpected pregnancy. One is a cook-in-demand at a hot New York City restaurant (owned by his brother) and the other is a waitress who gets fired after two days of missing work from morning sickness. Both are sort of escaping pain – she from the bleak future and he from his past. Several flashbacks and flashes to a possible future make watching the film seem like a blurry dream at times, but the relationship that builds between these two characters continues to pay off as the story unfolds. Will she get an abortion? Will he be a caregiver for her? Dealing with these sensitive issues with blunt and complex angles seems to give them the realistic respect and distance they probably deserve. I had heard a lot of hype about this film while it was screening at theaters, and while surprised at the mysterious and somewhat fuzzy outcome, I'm thinking it's deserving of the praise. *Doug Van Pelt*



02 FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS *HBOVIDEO*

A poster in the background of the first episode tells you all you need to know: "New Zealand! Don't expect much ... you'll love it!" Following two aspiring musicians from New Zealand on their journey to find fame in NY may make you feel dumber by the moment, but you'll definitely be laughing. *Haley Glasco*



03 WALK HARD: THE DEWEY COX STORY *SONYPICTURES*

Mocking the *Walk The Line* docu-drama on Johnny Cash's life, beginning with the pre-concert flashback to a childhood accident (a machete battle in the barn), this guffaw-filled flick pokes hard at all the excesses of the music life. Raunchy to a fault, it drives home the ridiculousness completely over the top. *DV*



04 THE COMEBACKS *FOXVIDEO*

Sometimes you have to see an awful movie all by yourself to verify that the critics' across-the-board panning has any validity. The production team behind *Wedding Crashers* threw as many sight gags and sophomoric innuendos as they could in this crappy football movie. The Journey song "Don't Stop Believing" is fun. *DV*



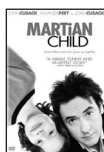
05 THE FINAL INQUIRY *FOXVIDEO*

This movie takes a spellbinding question (Did Jesus really resurrect from the dead?) and sets it in the most compelling of times (the years immediately after the event), but fails to achieve what could have been. The plot moves slowly and makes it easy to detach as a viewer, although the threat of danger comes across. *DV*



06 INTO THE WILD *PARAMOUNTVANTAGE*

Documenting the two-year, cross-country journey of Chris McCandless, *Into The Wild* is an amazing and inspiring true story that raises questions of life, death, materialism, family, God, and much more. If ever you need encouragement to make serious life changes or re-evaluations, Chris's story will motivate and propel you. *HG*



07 MARTIAN CHILD *NEWLINE*

Pairing siblings John and Joan Cusack together for this foster/adoption story is genius. It's too bad the tension in the "will they allow the adoption" question gets resolved too early and the main point of estrangement and trust seems to drag on too long. Pacing aside, it's a heartwarming story of love and acceptance. *DV*



08 ACROSS THE UNIVERSE *SONYPICTURES*

Film freaks and Beatles fans unite! This musical drama contains over 30 Beatles hits and special appearances by Bono, Joe Cocker and Eddie Izzard. Taking you on a psychedelic trip thru the 60's, it gives you the best musical entertainment in decades. You'll definitely find yourself singing along to your favorite hits ... or at least I did. *HG*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	90	10	70	10	100	100	80	70
OBSCENITIES		17	43	15		18		13
SCENES OF GORE			2			1		1
NUDITY / SEXUALITY			13	3		14		9



Crying For A Vision

Steve Scott – Author House

In the first half of the 1980's, Steve Scott's *Love in the Western World* virtually single-handedly justified the existence of the CCM subgenre. His subsequent artistic output continued to manifest excellence by any standard applied, and *Crying for a Vision*, a collection of essays concerned

with arriving at a truly Biblical approach to art, lays out for the reader precisely why his art has always been so strong. In his book, Scott critically engages art-theories promulgated by contemporary thinkers and philosophers, considering them in light of the implications of Scripture, and forcefully demonstrating the deficiencies of any approach to creativity grounded in anything other than the revealed Biblical doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Creation and Redemption (which is to say, in Christ Himself). His suggestions for basic principles of artistry, based upon a nuanced and comprehensive grasp of scriptural passages, are profound and deeply Biblical. If you are an artist (or a pastor), or are simply interested in art, it is imperative, for the good of the Church, that you read and digest this book. *Kemper Crabb*



Rapture Ready!

Daniel Radosh – Scribner

Preface: If you didn't like the movie *Saved!*, you won't like this book. Now that that's been said ... *Rapture Ready!* is a compilation of sadly humorous stories from Radosh's year-long expedition into America's Christian subculture. He ventures everywhere from Jim and Tammy

Faye Bakker's Holy Land theme park to Linda Dillow's (the Christian Dr. Ruth) pro-sex ministry to the Answers in Genesis (AiG) creationism museum. Throughout his journey Radosh becomes more aware that the majority of these extreme Christian demonstrations and developments are the projects of a minority Christian sect, Fundamentalism. Radosh concludes that "these extremists are irrelevant" – not just to the secular world, but to the evangelical world as well. "Centrist" or "Modernist" Christianity is on the rise, and Radosh predicts this growing group will be the one to bring about the demise of the religious right. He also questions how these groups will carry out a "crossover" Christian culture and how they will be received. "I think we are coming to a point when the parallel universe of Christian pop culture is going to collide with secular pop culture. And when that happens, will they enhance each other or will they explode?" *Haley Glasco*



Gadgets

Harmonix, Red Octane, Activision, & Peavey

(01) If you haven't jumped onto the **Guitar Hero** bandwagon yet, you're either not a gamer or you've bypassed it altogether for the more comprehensive, multi-"instrumental" title by one of the ex-GH parent companies (Harmonix), *Rock Band*. Opinions vary on the *Guitar Hero* games, *I, II* (\$59 bundled together) and *III* (\$89 bundled with wireless controller). **GH-II** made definite

improvements on the original by offering practice drills that allow you to slow down the speed at which the notes come scrolling by on the fretboard. People have their favorite songs, but they're all fun and guitar-dominated, which is perfect for the games. From "Easy" to "Expert," there are challenges for everyone. The "Halo Theme" in *III*'s expert mode has some sick note

patterns all across the frets, for example; and hitting a 50 or 100 note streak is no easy feat. The Kramer wireless controller bundled with *III* is slightly heavier than previous ones, but for a realistic feel of the instrument, (02) Peavey's **AG Riffmaster** (\$399) takes the guitar controller to new weights, crafted out of solid wood, tuning pegs and all the GH controls. It's suh-weet! *DV*

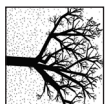
[activision.com, redoctane.com, peavey.com, guitarhero.com]



FOR TODAY EKKLESIA

For Today is releasing a new full-length album in early April. In the interest of full disclosure, due to press constraints, it was not possible to obtain a full copy of their debut release, *Ekklesia*. At their label's behest, I was only able to review a snippet of songs from the record, and NOT the whole thing. That being said, I was not incredibly fascinated with the songs I heard. For Today is a metal band out of Iowa, and their claim as one of the most technically proficient metal bands around right now is probably true; there are spots on the songs that definitely prove themselves to be incredible musicians. But in the spots where there isn't extremely technical music, the songs lack originality, especially in their breakdowns. They're very capable of the "video game" style of sweep-picking, but they don't do it enough and it's what they're best at. If they would focus their efforts more on the technical work and lay off the fairly weak breakdown chants, the record would stand out more in an over-saturated market of mediocre metal bands who use breakdowns as a way to disguise their playing ability.

[FACEDOWN]-DAVID STAGG



FOXHOLE WE THE WINTERING TREE

Utilizing a seasonal analogy to mystify their instrumental rock vehicle, Foxhole's *We The Wintering Tree* is a study in musical panache. The genre is a rough one to break into and this re-release of a 2004 disc doesn't seem a proper strategy – that is, until you take in all its beauty. "The End of Dying" tries a bit much, but the sedated "A Series of Springs and Falls" is more autumnally beautiful. The guitars are sweet, the tones rich and vibrant. Overall, it's both jagged and poetic and Foxhole's bravery should be rewarded, or at least noted.

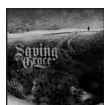
[BURNT-TOAST-VINYL]-MATT CONNER



EVER STAYS RED ON THE BRINK OF IT ALL

After almost calling it quits last summer, Ever Stays Red is making a strong comeback with *On The Brink Of It All*. The band's third album is a collection of melodic praise anthems confessing life struggles and issues. "To Shine For You," is a raw declaration of the tendency to shy away from our faith during challenging times while the title track, "On The Brink Of It All," draws on the themes of hope and anticipation. Resonating musically with the likes of Copeland, although not quite as good, Ever Stays Red is still working to adjust their sound since member Grace Amankwe walked away. The new album is catchy, radio stations will love it, but I wouldn't classify *On The Brink Of It All* as the group's most prominent album to date.

[VSR-MUSIC-GROUP]-HALEY GLASCO



SAVING GRACE BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Listening to Saving Grace is like being on an extreme rollercoaster of hard core metal set with intense highs and lows. *Behind Enemy Lines* takes off hard and fast in "The Most Beautiful Promise," with brutal riffage and a powerful breakdown, where their raw screams break to speak a message of self-denial. The remainder of the album lulls, including a misplaced and lengthy melodious interlude, until "Just A Second" pulls the album back up to its initial ferocity with relentless anthems. "Last Chance To Dance" demonstrates Saving Grace's aptitude for making a strong denouement. These guys definitely know how to mix the brutality of metal with the passion and power of traditional hardcore.

[HARVEST-EARTH]-HALEY GLASCO

OLIVIA THE BAND

WHERE WE COME FROM IT NEVER SNOWS

Not everyone from Hawaii plays a ukulele and heeds to the laid-back vibe of a summer Sunday barbeque. Aloha State natives Olivia The Band pump out smooth pop punk as if the late 90's never ended. Bassist Reed Cromwell has the occasional ability to mimic Dexter Holland's uncanny pitch while the band's tragically titled second full-length, *Where We Come From It Never Snows*, instills an almost perpetual antsy spree. But when the act attempts to stray away from their bubbly bliss with pseudo-ballads ("What I Need") or forced intensity ("It's On"), they completely wipe out. Now if only they sang in Pidgin...

[SYNTAX-UP-AT-NITE]-DAN FRAZIER



OCEANA THE TIDE

After you learn that Oceana is from St. Petersburg, Florida, you might assume how the teenager band chose their name. Then after you learn that the quintet named their debut album *The Tide*, you might dismiss them as just completely unoriginal. But while their music pulls key signatures from melodic metalcore and screamo, they manage to mix it slightly with their own ingredients into a montage that carries an appealing concept of strife ("Reach For The Sky"), doubt ("We Are The Messengers"), and fear ("Isolophobia," "Anthophobia"). Vocalist Keith Jones's screams attempt to dominate the tracks, but it's the well-executed guitar work (floating solos ripped from the defunct Beloved's catalog) of Alex Schultz and Jack Burns that keep the songs in transition while the group's use of pausing atmospheric keys results in an epic wall of sound that never drowns.

[RISE]-DAN FRAZIER



CHRIS TAYLOR TAKE ME ANYWHERE

The melodies sliding through my headphones are far different than what I thought the white, skinny, 20-something Chris Taylor would create. His BEC debut, *Take Me Anywhere*, ignores the annoying whining and power chords you might presume and instead displays a style informed by Euro-synth rock and building acoustic numbers. First impression "Turn Me Around" boasts an expansive sound as large as the vertical lyrics found within. "Atmosphere" is a bit more subdued Leeland-style, but maintains the primary ethereal feel. "That's How It Goes" is a bit more straightforward in its piano-pop presentation while "Safe" mines darker layers before building to an all-Taylor chorus. *Take Me Anywhere* is a worshipful record with music to match its heavenly trajectory. And it might just be BEC Recording's most impressive debut to date.

[BEC-RECORDINGS]-MATT CONNER

Ratings

	DV	Writer
For Today <i>Ekklesia</i>	03*	02*
Foxhole <i>We The Wintering Tree</i>	03	03
Ever Stays Red <i>On The Brink Of It All</i>	03	03
Saving Grace <i>Behind Enemy Lines</i>	03	02*
Olivia The Band <i>Where We Come From It Never Snows</i>	03*	03
Oceana <i>The Tide</i>	03	03
Chris Taylor <i>Turn Me Around</i>	03	04
Santana <i>Multi-Dimensional Warrior</i>	03*	
Johnny Cash <i>Reading the Complete New Testament</i>	05	
Soapbox <i>This Fragile Journey</i>	02*	
Admiral Twin <i>The Center Of The Universe</i>	03	03
PLAYRADIOPLAY! <i>Texas</i>	03*	04
Greeley Estates <i>Go West Young Man, Let The Evil Go East</i>	04	
Justin McRoberts <i>Deconstruction</i>	03	04
Burning Tree Project <i>Time And Color</i>	03*	
Thrice <i>The Alchemy Index, Vol. III•IV</i>	04	

SANTANA

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL WARRIOR

Mix tapes used to be my own private little record label for myself. I'd get colored fine-tip markers out and decorate the cassette spine inserts, find cool magazine photos, and just get all into making my own private mix tapes. Sometimes I'd go with a theme, based on lyrics ("Songs about Johnny," for example, was a fun one with story songs that involved a character named Johnny; and I had a whole series of "Excellence" tapes of sweet melodic ballads). Someone over at Columbia's Legacy label has one-upped me on this idea by putting a collection of Carlos Santana's "spiritual songs" together in this two-disc CD set. Talk about "Chill Music..." Man, anyone familiar with this guy's unmistakable guitar tones and the feeling in his fingers knows that he can emote the most beautiful music. Like many a famous artist, Santana publicly professed his faith in Christ back in the early 80s, which many of us musos took rapt attention towards. Songs from the last four decades appear on this collection and, for the first time, it collates material from three major label associations – Columbia, Polydor and Arista/BMG. Disc One traverses the most time in a noticeable way, with all vocal songs; while Disc Two features nothing but instrumentals.

[COLUMBIA/LEGACY] DOUG VAN PELT

JOHNNY CASH

READING THE COMPLETE NEW TESTAMENT

There's no real music here, but it's still a great mix: "the voice" reading the Word. Both the narrative and the preaching segments, like the "Sermon on the Mount" and Peter in Jerusalem in Acts, come across as interesting and as riveting as these accounts should be; but it's the poetic and apocalyptic readings of Revelation that really take the cake on this 16-disc collection in a nice boxset with two fold-out cardboard wallets.

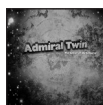
[THOMAS NELSON] DOUG VAN PELT

SOAPBOX

THIS FRAGILE JOURNEY

Soapbox is like four guys hustling through a shop, bristling people with their instruments who refused to get outta their way, desperately lunging in a race to open wide the doors for their singer's perfectly timed entrance/outburst. Simon Brännström probably spits more than he cares to realize as he emotes his feelings on hurt, failure, and his good God. It kinda bogs down in the middle, but for awhile it soars.

[TALKING MUSIC/RETROACTIVE] DOUG VAN PELT



ADMIRAL TWIN

THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

Members of Admiral Twin may be Christians, but their connection to Christian music is tenuous at best, at least based upon the lyrical evidence of *The Center of the Universe*. Even a song with the spiritually-themed title of "If Hell Is like You" is actually just another melodic, power-pop gem. On it they sing: "If the Devil's like you / And the word that you break / Then I'm gonna be a good Christian / Mother Teresa has nothing on me." Yet what the band lacks in Christian-ese, it more than makes up for with cool and memorably melodic rock songs, like the otherworldly "Renegade Planet" and the Elvis-like anti-media aggression expressed via "Smash It Up." Sing-able tunes are always at the center of Admiral Twin's sugar sweet universe.

[THE POP COLLECTIVE] DAN MACINTOSH



PLAYRADIOPLAY!

TEXAS

Being a native Texan I had high expectations from a band that would name their debut album after the great Lone Star state ... it had better be something just as grand. PLAYRADIOPLAY! definitely delivers with *Texas*. Reminiscent of Postal Service, creative electro-pop beats and sonic sound permeate the album and are complemented by Daniel Hunter's (also a native Texan) metaphorical, nostalgic and personal lyrics. Tracks like "Loco Motion," "Some Crap About Furniture" and "I'm A Pirate, You're A Princess" demonstrate Hunter's extreme musical talent. To understand the brilliance of this album, you must first know that at one time Hunter orchestrated these grandiose electro beats as a solo artist – playing, recording and mixing each part himself (he now has a full band). In a market full of recycled pop-rock hits *Texas* is "two-steps" in the right direction. HM actually chose PLAYRADIOPLAY! as a "Pick of the Litter" band in the last September/October issue. We really know how to pick 'em, huh?

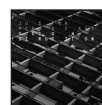
[ISLAND] HALEY GLASCO

GREELEY ESTATES

GO WEST YOUNG MAN, LET THE EVIL GO EAST

This witty-titled follow-up to 2006's *Far From The Lies* (on The Record Collection) shows the band progressing from heavy, intense push-you-to-the-limit emo/screamo/post-hardcore/metalcore/whatever to a more intricate performance, expanding those limits and boundaries ever so slightly. The guitars seem a bit faster, more complex, and maybe not as willing to just co-exist or supplement the vocals as the chief sonic bed; but they threaten to take over as the main focus. It's easy to latch on to the swirling and semi-haunting background gang vocals in tunes like "Blue Morning." Maybe *Go West Young Man, Let The Evil Go East* won't be as radio friendly as *Far From The Lies*, but the overcrowded scene can always use a band that brings it with the kind of creativity, passion and intensity that GE or Underoath bring to the table.

[SCIENCE] DOUG VAN PELT



JUSTIN MCROBERTS

DECONSTRUCTION

Justin McRoberts' new CD features lyrics every Christian needs to hear. It pulls no punches and aims squarely for the church's midsection on the title track, where McRoberts sings: "They say it's not about religion / But then they tell you how to think." Ouch! McRoberts is not at odds with the church, however. Instead, he has serious issues with an American brand of Christianity where the so-called faithful can pass right by an accident victim ("Driving by the Accident"), which is likely a metaphor for the world's poor, without doing anything to help. Even so, McRoberts is humble enough to admit that all his keen insight doesn't make him anything special. "My only victory is Jesus," he admits during "My Only Victory." The sonic on *Deconstruction* is mostly the quiet, acoustic variety. Nevertheless, McRoberts' incendiary words are consistently louder than bombs.

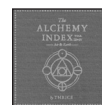
[SELF-RELEASED] DAN MACINTOSH

BURNING TREE PROJECT

TIME AND COLOR

The bands that realize that everyone fancies themselves a vocalist are usually the ones that find a bigger audience. Not everyone believes they can drum, lay down a bass line, or play guitar or piano along to a song; but even the most simple and talentless of us all will sing along at the top of our lungs when a catchy song plays loud. Not too far off the musical scope of, say, an outfit like Anberlin, Burning Tree Project crafts each stair-stepping chord progression in a key that evokes a cooperative effort with Erik Lin's clean, melodic vocals. The six short songs on *Time And Color* beg for more material from this talented six-piece.

[DISCO TECH] DOUG VAN PELT



THRICE

THE ALCHEMY INDEX VOLS. III • IV

Air & Earth finish off the four volume set known as *The Alchemy Index*. This is supposed to express and reflect the more ambient and organic sides of the band. It's insane that a band can break down its repertoire into four separate categories, but looking back into their catalog reveals that they indeed can embody these distinct styles – and do them well. *Vheissu's* "The Earth Will Shake" and "Atlantic" back to back performances serve as a hint as to how well they can tackle a stripped down, rootsy vibe one minute, and an airy, floating and vocal one the next. Adding to the complexity of their masterful breakdown of their artistic elements, the songs are bound by thematic and lyrical similarities. *Air* speaks of flying, breathing, the sky and the wind. *Earth* takes on dirt, graves and animals. A couple of gems for believers and seekers to mull over are found in "Moving Mountains," which expounds on the theme Paul discussed in his "love chapter" and the persuasive words of Christ in "Come All You Weary." This collection is a keeper on all levels.

[VAGRANT] DOUG VAN PELT

FIF

Hey! The Five Iron Frenzy catalog is available for download at iTunes.

"It's about time!"

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5 Minute Walk Records: Love God, Love Others, Take Time To Listen



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What **Kittie** Says

WHEN IT COMES TO GIRLS BEING TOUGH, KITTIE DOMINATES OVER PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS, LIKE THE RUNAWAYS, GIRLSCHOOL, MAYBE EVEN SLEATER-KINNEY. GETTING A CHANCE TO CHAT WITH KITTIE'S MORGAN LANDER WAS A JOY AND AN HONOR. LIKE SOME OF ROCK AND METAL'S HARDEST ACTS, THE ARTISTS INVOLVED IN CREATING RIP THE PAINT OFF WALLS DISTORTION ARE OFTEN THE KINDEST PEOPLE YOU'D MEET. SUCH WAS THE ENCOUNTER WITH THIS TRUE LADY.



What are some of the biggest victories and the biggest challenges that Kittie faces right now in this point in your career?

Oh wow, haha. This is a tough question that I could possibly go on forever and ever. I mean, obviously in terms of victories: being able to overcome all the obstacles that we have overcome in these past few years is a victory in itself. You know, just being here still as a band and being able to create and be musical and play in front of people is a victory for me as well. You know, we had a lot of success really early on, and in some ways I think it was too much too soon. Um, back when our first album came out and after that we had a lot of trouble with our previous label as well as, you know, a number of line-up changes ... and just to be able to have a second chance at, you know, proving ourselves as a band, and sort of being reborn anew is, um, a victory in itself. That I'm able to talk to you sitting here in the back of a tour bus riding through North Carolina – we are so amazingly grateful to still be a band. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that after being in the industry for a good 8 years and sort of learning as we go along... you know, I guess have taken control of our situation and we've started our own label, so that's really cool – being able to be in control and that's sort of what has given us our second chance. As far as challenges, they kinda go hand in hand, you know? It's a challenge of continuing to be a band, to get along, to further ourselves musically. These are all things we readily take on as challenges, but I think it needs to be recognized – not just for being women in a band... I think it's definitely something that we'll have to overcome eventually, but I think things are definitely starting to open up in terms of peoples' acceptance of women in hard rock and metal. Definitely in the mainstream it's a lot easier now, but still people tend to, you know, pigeonhole bands and ... uh, I think it's kinda unfortunate. I mean, if we were solely relying on a novelty, I don't think we would still be here. So, there is obviously some substance going on with the music... I don't know, like I said, I'm just happy to be here. I think we've been given a 2nd chance and we are just so grateful for it.

If you were honest and had to categorize, um, some of your favorite bands or bands you listen to quite often into 3 different categories. 1 category was: "I kinda listen to this so people can hear me listening to this and build credibility"; 1 category is: "I listen to this and I close my eyes and I'm kinda in heavenly bliss; I don't care what anybody else thinks; it just brings a smile to my face"; And other music you listen to, to maybe challenge yourself or pay attention to what the artist is doing, in more of an analytical musician sort of way...

Wow, um... that's difficult. I mean, my tastes have definitely changed a lot over the years. I think, you know, the way that we express ourselves is through hard rock and metal music. But, as I've gotten older I definitely don't listen to it as much anymore. And, usually when I go back and listen to some of the bands I used to listen to ... you know, 7 or 8 years ago, it's more of a nostalgic thing for me. And, so I would probably have to put a lot of the, like, death metal, you know, power metal, you know Swedish kinda style metal in that first category of, you know, I'm listening to it, I listen to it because, you know, I draw from it, you know, because it's metal music, but it's not necessarily something that I listen to, to challenge myself and, you know, 'I have to be metal, because I'm in a metal band.' You know what I'm sayin? Haha. So, I would put that in the first category. I don't know, I think that the 2nd and 3rd category kinda go together a little bit. I've never really been ashamed of any kind of music that I've ever listened to. But for me, there is a lot of stuff that's definitely on the lighter side of things. Bands like Far, the Gathering, even, like Massive Attack, that sort of thing for me is music that ... Code 7, even ... uh, bands that I enjoy listening to because they're different and they're musically kind of challenging. For me, it's not always about the message and what they're singing; it's a lot more about the emotions that are being conveyed, and I can appreciate that kind of different style of music, because I don't think it's something that I could ever do, and so I appreciate the variety.

I've got uh, an old friend of mine, that some of his oldest children are in a band it's an all girl metal band that is kinda playing some death metal stuff. They're called Silhouette AD, and they would love the fact that I'm asking you this question. But, what kind of advice would you give them to, uh, you know, hone their craft and excel at this crazy music business? It is a crazy music business, honestly. Uh, how long have they been a band for?

I am guessing, uhbb... a year and a half, two years maybe.

Really? Oh, that's so awesome. How old are they? Do you know?

Um, I'm thinking 18...19.

Oh nice, ok. Well, they're definitely a little older than we were when we first started out as a band. You know, I would say: 'Definitely practice as much as you can.' The unfortunate part about being a woman in the music business, you know, as crazy as it is, is that you have to, you know, be 10 times better than a guy out there in order to get people's attention. So, practice and know what you're doing and be in love with writing and creating. It's a great feeling to get together with your best friends and be excited about stuff. Try different things as much as possible ... in terms of like, you know, getting recognition in the local scene, that sort of thing. For us, when we first started, we did a lot of the battle of the bands type thing. Where it was a lot of different bands. Everybody kind of had to sell tickets, and whoever sold the most tickets was the winner or whatever. But, while we never actually won any of those, it was a great opportunity to network and talk to different bands and different styles of bands, and play shows and that sort of thing. So, I would definitely recommend that. It's a great way to get to play in front of a different audience and meet some other people. And just be yourself. I think it's the most important thing – be true to who you are and what you believe in, and never let anyone ever tell you otherwise. The most important thing; because, if you are comfortable and happy with what you are doing and it's who you are, then people are going to see that and people are going to recognize that and be drawn to it. And so, no compromise.

Right on. Tell me a little bit, uh, about each member of Kittie. Maybe serious, maybe humorous and include yourself.

Oh gosh! We have surprisingly different personalities. Definitely. I mean, we all obviously share a common love of music. Mercedes and I are, obviously, sisters and so we have this special kind of bond that goes with playing together, and being siblings, as well as being business partners. So, we have a very funny relationship. I don't know, it's kinda bizarre. It's kinda like a 'Sonny and Cher'-ish kind of relationship, where Mercedes will always make fun of me, and I'm sort of the foil – that sort of thing. It's kinda funny. We've been together doing this for such a long time, we are best friends. We're business partners, we're writing partners, and we are the foundation of Kittie. And so, I don't know, we have a big responsibility, but I think, with all that we've been through we've actually come out alright. I think of all of the band, Mercedes definitely has the biggest personality of the 4 of us. You know, she is very outgoing. She's sort of a 'tell it like it is' kinda person; she is also a lot of fun, as well. She loves to have a good time, and loves to make

other people happy and she loves what she does. The 2 new girls: Tara and Trish, they're both from London, Ontario. And they both are heavily involved in music. Trish actually worked at one of the only really good music stores in London. Trish is a really cool girl. She's definitely a little more quiet and reserved, I guess, in comparison to Tara. They both have a lot of similar qualities. They're both pretty quiet and reserved, but after knowing them for a few years and having everybody kinda come out of their shells a little bit, they're ... I don't know. Trish is just a fun girl, she likes to have a good time, but she likes to do different things and have a good time. I think, for her, metal is a little bit different. She wasn't necessarily into metal, and so for her it's kind of a newer experience. Which is really cool, because she's kinda like the little sister asking all kinds of questions and she's just very curious and inquisitive when it comes to everything for music and even just life in general. You know, she's always asking us... It's kinda funny, but very endearing. And, Tara is a well-studied guitar player. She's more into blues and classic rock kinda style, and you can definitely tell with the new album; but, you know, a lot of her influence – in terms of like solos and leads – come from that. Tara is probably one of the most laid-back, chill people that I have ever known. She is so easy-going and she just wants to, you know, have a good time and just be herself and be relaxed. She's kind of a middle nonsense, no stress kind of person. It's really cool. I guess I should talk about myself too, huh?

Ha ha...

Ha, that's the hardest thing ever to talk about yourself. I guess people would say that I am the natural leader of the band. I don't know. I'm a big weirdo. I just love... I'm a people person, but I love to make people happy and put others before myself. And I love to be creative. I love my family, I love being in this band, and you know, that's pretty much what I'm all about.

Well, let's say God raises John Bonham from the dead. And there's time to rehearse, and they're gonna set up chairs and a massive sound system, and satellite TV in the Mojave Desert. And Led Zeppelin is going to reunite and play 5 songs. You get to pick the 5 songs and why?

Oh my God. Honestly, I'm not even all that familiar with that kind of Led Zeppelin – to tell you the truth. That's probably more of a question for Tara, cause she is more of a classic rock person. Would you like me to get her, and have her give her top 5?

Sure, let's have fun.

Sure, I'll go ask her. Cause ... I mean, I'm familiar with the songs, but I'm not all that... (Turns to Tara) Tara, you need to talk to this guy. God's going to raise John Bonham from the dead, and Led Zeppelin is gonna play 5 songs. What ones? Would you like to hear?

Tara: Oooh! 'Moby Dick.' 'Black Dog.' 'Ramblin' Man,' with 'Livin', Lovin', Made.' And 'The Lemon Song,' because it's hilarious.

That was awesome.

(Morgan returns) Sweet. See? She knows what's up.

How do you judge one of your performances, and how do you know when a song – when, like, you're working out a song as a band – whether it's a good song or not?

I don't know. I think a lot of times it's mostly the feeling that you get. For Mercedes and I, when we are writing a song it's usually music first. And I think, personally, for me when we're writing a song, I'm thinking of lyrical and the potential for melody. So, I don't know a lot of times... it's just like, you know, you're creating something and you get excited about it, and you're not even sure why; that's usually a song that we're going to see as our next greatest hit. And, you know, there's always songs that you like and you kinda feel good about them, but you're kinda like ... well, I don't know, 'This part I'm not really sure of,' or 'I'm not sure how this is going to turn out,' or it's more about the feeling that you get when you're writing. And, some of the performances... I mean, I guess a lot of it has to do with crowd reaction, as well. If people are just standing there, you know, it's not really gonna give off good feedback. You know what I mean? You want everybody to come to the show and putting their hands up, and singing along, and moving and that sort of thing. And, usually the best shows are the ones where there's a lot of crowd participation. So, that's most of the time how we judge how well we've done with the show.

What's the most out of hand you've ever seen a crowd get, and how did you feel about it?

The most out of hand? Well, honestly I hate seeing people get hurt. It actually really, really truly frightens me. Because you never want anyone to be so seriously injured. It could be life threatening or anything like that. But, I've seen a lot of really, really crazy shows. There was one time in Lubbock that they pushed over the barricades. I believe it was on our first tour. There was so many people in Lubbock, Texas that they pushed over the barricade that was bolted to the floor. And we had to stop, like, 30 seconds into our first song, because people were getting way too out of control. And, that's really scary, you know? I've met people after the show that have, like, broken ribs or (have) broken their collarbone. And, that's kinda scary, too. That, to me, is a little too out of hand. Our shows are meant to be fun and an experience that we both have a good time together. But, it should never be that violent. Even though we do play aggressive music doesn't necessarily mean that you have to hurt yourself or whatever. There's been so many crazy shows. At Ozzfest, I remember simply because there were... It was at a place called like Pine Knob, and there's a lot of trees in the audience section. And people were climbing up the trees to get a better view, and then jumping. And that was pretty scary, but I guess, you know, the view was pretty good from the trees, so...

Awesome. What do you think about Jesus Christ?

Um... Well, I am not necessarily a Christian per-se. But, I am very interested in a lot of, you know, the history of Christianity. And, obviously, I watch a lot of television, a lot of the History Channel, and I think it's very fascinating. I believe that Jesus did walk the earth, and he was a person, and um... You know, I think, 'Whatever works for people' – for other people, you know? I think it's important to believe in something and, you know, for Christians to believe in Jesus Christ is something that is important in their life. For us, personally, with our music, you know, we don't necessarily interject any religious or political, you know, ideas into our music. And that's solely because I know that we have, you know, Christian fans as well as

non-Christian fans. And for us it's important to, you know, make up your own mind and believe in what you want to believe in. We're not trying to preach anything, because, for us our music is about emotion and the everyday situation. We feel like it's not our place to tell people what they should think or believe in or, you know, who they should vote for or, you know, the like... So, for us we try to remain as neutral as possible.

What do you think about His claims to be: "The Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by me?"

Um... I don't know. Again, you know, that's for, um, Christian people to decide. You know, if people believe in Jesus Christ then that would, you know, that's it man. That's, you know, then He is the way.

How important is visual art to you? You know, as a musician you make, you know, audible art. How important is a visual to you and your band and why?

In terms of, like, an actual show? For us, it's ... I mean, it's not like you're gonna come to a show and you're gonna see, like, crazy pyro or anything like that. For us, it's about the music when we play loud; and so, it's pretty much as stripped down as possible. It's just us four girls up there, you know, just rockin' out and havin' a good time. I mean, obviously, it's important that we feel good about ourselves, and, you know, we obviously take care of ourselves; we like to look nice. But, it's not the be-all and end-all of what it is to be in a band. In terms of the art direction... with CDs and that sort of thing, we are definitely 100% involved in that, you know. It's our ideas that go down onto paper, and usually it's a reflection of what a lot of the songs are about, and a reflection of the emotion that's been put into the music. It is definitely important, but you want to be able to put something in that represents the music and, I guess, what's inside the CD, and that sort of thing.

If you had um, 24 hours before you lost your sight, what are some things you would like to see in your last 24 hours?

Oh my God... Um, I would probably... Wow, there's a lot of things. There's a few places that I've actually seen already in my life, so I can't really, you know, I can't really complain about that. I would probably go and see the pyramids and go to Egypt. I think it would be very interesting to check all the history out and go to all the museums, and you know, see where a lot of really interesting history was made. I think that would probably be one of the places. Like, I've already been to France, I've seen the Eiffel Tower, you know? I'm sure lots of people say that or whatever. Um, honestly, if I had 24 hours I would probably, I don't know. I'd go to Egypt and then I'd probably come home, and just hang out with my family, and, you know, see them.

What's the last thing you do before you go on stage?

The last thing that we do? Well, we usually put our hands together and we do a little chant, like a little, "LaLaLa..." you know, that sort of thing. Kind of get ourselves pumped. Probably one second before I go on I make sure

my volume's on. Haha... Just to make sure. You know, you never want to go onstage and have the volume turned down. You'd pretty look silly.

Ha ha. What's the funniest or most frustrating mistake or mishap that's ever happened to you guys onstage?

Well, we've had a few incidents where it's been pretty dark onstage, and I know that Tara has almost fallen off the stage as well as Trish. I'm pretty stagnant when it comes to movement around on stage, because I'm behind a microphone most of the time playing guitar... So they've almost fallen off the stage a couple of times. I think probably one of the funniest things that I've ever seen while, you know, playing was: in the middle of the set Mercedes – who's the drummer – really had to go to the bathroom (haha), and she really needed to pee, and so, uh, we stopped the show, so that she could run to the bathroom. And it was kinda like the time where I guess it was so bad that, you know, she couldn't hold it. So, it was kind of like, "Oh, let's have a little solo," while we try

melodic vocal. I think, that's sort of the more direction that we're gonna be going into in the future.

Speaking of vocal, what are some of the secrets you'd be willing to share, or tips on how to create some of the extreme metal vocalizations as well as sustain and maintain that voice over a few years?

Honestly, it's weird that I've been able to scream. To me it's almost been a mystery. I know that the sound and the ability for it to be sustained over the years has improved and I think it's because of some practice, but I'm absolutely completely nuts about Melissa Cross, who is a vocal teacher, and she has a couple of DVD's out, called *The Zen of Screaming*, and she actually is a vocal coach. She specializes in teaching a lot of mainstream popular metal bands to learn how to scream properly, to minimize the vocal chord damage, and that sort of thing. I actually met her on this tour, a few weeks ago, and she told me that I was doing everything right, and I figured it out on my own, so I'm not even sure. For me personally, it's more about projection rather than just trying to, you know, scream as loud as you possibly can. I think, for me, it's more

"It's just us four girls up there, just rockin' out and havin' a good time."

to keep the crowd distracted while Mercedes runs to the bathroom. So, I thought that was pretty funny.

So, what's your prediction on what's gonna happen with the future of music with the whole digital world changing a lot of things and record companies freaking out?

Well that's a really, really hard call. I think, you know, as technology evolves it's going to become easier and easier for people to have access to music, and to put it out themselves. I think that there's always going to be a desire and a need for a tangible CD, to actually go out and buy a CD to hold the artwork in your hands, to be able to look through it and read the lyrics, you know, that sort of thing. I'm not sure, in ten years or so, how much of the market is going to be... I think, in order to keep their heads afloat, record companies are gonna have to evolve with the technology and find a way to, I guess, compensate for the amount of digital downloads and that sort of thing, and find a way to keep technology-savvy people interested. There's always going to be people that are gonna want to buy CDs, but I think younger generations are more about finding their things online. It's interesting, but to continue to be relevant they're gonna have to evolve with the technology as well, and find other ways for people to get their music.

What songs on your new album are you most excited about and why?

Wow, that's definitely a hard question. It's like picking your favorite album ... which is impossible. I think the songs that we sort of challenged ourselves and redefined who we are as a band, and redefined ourselves musically... Those are the songs that I'm most excited about. Songs like "Breathe," songs like "Summer Dies." To me, those are songs that really represent where we are going with the music, and really represents the evolution in the music and the changes... the growth that we've had as a band over the past few years. I think that there's definitely a lot more stuff in that particular direction. You know, blending the heavy music with a more

about breathing from – not necessarily your diaphragm, but more, like, sort of the sides, you know – more around your rib cage, and holding yourself in a certain position that allows air to come in and out very easily. I don't know, it's very complicated, because it's not something that I know a particular technique for. You know, I was told I was doing everything right, and so she didn't really go into, "Oh, this is how it's done..." But, it is very controlled, and it's actually not quite as loud as you would think it is. It's more about the projection and the amount of air that's flowing through your throat, rather than trying to scream as loud as you possibly can; because, you know, that's going to injure your vocal chords.

Right. So, what is your guitar set-up and your guitar rig set-up?

I actually play through a triple rectifier, Mesa F Boogie, and I have a Hamer Vector. That's my guitar. And I pretty much run straight amp distortion. You know, I've always been a no-nonsense kind of purist, and I'm not really all that technologically advanced, you know, when it comes to all sorts of things – computers, and that sort of thing. So, for me it's just easiest for me that I just plug right in and play. We use Audix mics and we use wireless units.

Any last thoughts or things you wanted to, uh, express or communicate?

Well, first of all, thank you to everyone who purchased the CD, and if you haven't please do. It's called *Funeral After Yesterday*. It's out now. You can check out our website at kittierock.com and our myspace at myspace.com/officialkittie. We run our own myspace, so you know, if anybody wants to send us a message we will hopefully try to get back to them; it's difficult while we're on the road, you know, because our internet router is kinda a pain in the (bleep) sometimes. But, thanks to everyone who supported the band in the past, and hopefully we will be seeing you soon in the future.

Soul Embraced

BY ANDREW SCHWAB

Metal is more than beards, long hair, and southern influences...

As the brainchild of veteran Rocky Gray (Evanescence, Living Sacrifice), Soul Embraced began as more of a studio experiment some years ago, prior to his involvement with Evanescence (Rocky played drums for the band for several years up until recently). Now, SE is back with one of the most accomplished metal albums this year ... and I do not exaggerate when I say this. Gray and company have delivered an overwhelming breath of fresh air for those, like myself, who have become weary of the played out fashion that is metalcore today. This is a record you must own if you are a fan of heavy music – plain and simple. It has great production, great songwriting, great riffs, unique leads, and dominating vocals. I caught up with Rocky recently to hear his thoughts on everything from leaving his former band to his current goals...

ced

Since your last full length, it has been some time. How has the band changed since the last time you released a record?

Since our last record, *Immune*, we've gotten a full time bassist – Jeff Bowie and guitarist – Devin Castle. The long amount of time between *Immune* and *Dead Alive* was really good for us, actually; we were able to get the best songs out of us, cause we had the time to spend on it. Some of these songs have been around for more than a year. The time also allowed the new members of the band to contribute to the songwriting. Devin helped out a lot with coming up with new ideas for some of the existing songs we had and brought in full songs and lyrics as well. We've been doing a lot more shows and that's way different from the last time we had a record out. I don't think we even did one show for *Immune* and before that we had only done maybe 5 shows total. The biggest change is that we used to be pretty much a studio project that would play live here and there, but now it's our main thing and are really trying to take the band to the next level.

The new LP is brutal in a way that is completely different from the current fashion in heavy music. What, specifically, do you think sets you apart from the newest metalcore trends?

We do what we want to do, that's mainly what sets us apart. I don't even know what metalcore is anymore; maybe I didn't understand what it was, anyway. We never say, "Hey, this song doesn't have a breakdown, so we have to write one so the kids can go off in the pit." That's not what we do. This record is for metalheads by metalheads. If you don't like real metal, you won't like this record.

I like to stick to what we do best and leave the trends to the others. The whole trend thing in metal drives me nuts; for example, when a dude (or dudes) has a full blown beard ... real metal is all about do what you want to do no matter what anyone says. I mean, I think it's just ridiculous to me that it's trendy to have a beard or long hair or Southern influences in your music. That being

said, yes, some of us in SE have beards; and yes, there are some of us that have long hair; and yes, we have Southern influences in our music. So, for all you trendy folks out there, I am just letting you know SE is now cool!

Describe the unique vision that is the new record, *Dead Alive*.

Its visual side goes with the lyrical side. It's about spiritually coming back from the dead. We worked with Travis Smith for the artwork. We worked with Travis on *This Is My Blood* and we loved what he did and wanted to return to that kind of feel for the new record.

You spent several years playing in Evanescence. How is transitioning back into Soul Embraced treating you? What did you enjoy about playing in a multi-platinum act, and what do you not miss about it?

The transition has been really easy. Playing in a band with these characters is hassle free most of the time and minimal to no drama, so I'm loving it. Playing with a big band like Ev is fun, because every show is a headlining arena show and you get free clothes and gear, you're on a big tour bus and the bills are all paid on time. You have to come back down to earth and be a real person at some point, though. I don't miss being gone from my family for months at a time and being out of the country more than in the country. I don't miss that stuff at all. I do miss the arena shows, tour bus and free gear now, though!

Describe the lyrical approach to the newest LP. What are you trying to say? What are your favorite tracks?

Dead Alive is actually one of the most honest records we've done as far as lyrics go. There's a lot of anger on this record – anger at one's self and at others. We just laid it out there as we felt it, not that it's the right feelings or thoughts, but it's where we were at the time, and we put it down on paper. We pretty much kept going from where *Immune* left off, sort of like a poetic journal. My time with Evanescence fueled a few

songs lyrically as well as the loss of some family and friends in the last few years, which also inspired our first ever instrumental track, called "In Memory." I really love every song on this record. A couple of knock-your-teeth-out tracks are "Into Darkness," "Curtain of Deceit" and "Breaking Point."

Between juggling time in the different bands over the years (Soul Embraced, Evanescence, Living Sacrifice), how do you feel like this project features a unique aspect of your personality versus your role in the other outfits?

The only real difference is the way songs get written, really. In SE I'm right at home with coming up with lyrical ideas, melodies, riffs and that kind of stuff; whereas, in the other bands, it's a little more reserved. I don't throw out as much stuff, cause I'm usually inspired more by what they come up with and build the songs from there. I bring stuff to the table, for sure, but with a band like Living Sacrifice I'm inspired a lot by what Lance will come up with. Once Lance comes up with a beat, the possibilities are limited only by our abilities or even when Lance comes up with a complete song there's still ways for me to toss in my personality to it – being a lead part or just a certain bend to a note or a squeal. I find ways to make a riff feel like me and not like I'm just playing a riff that wasn't my own.

What are your long-term goals for Soul Embraced?

We're in it for the long haul. We are gearing up to tour our tails off to make sure that people take notice that this band means business. It's been a long time coming, and now that *Dead Alive* is here, there's really nothing that can stop us. We will destroy any stage, anywhere, with anybody. Boom! That just happened.

✕

Southern

THE SONG OF THE SOUTH

BY NATHAN DOYLE

It hit like a dust storm flying over the horizon, a sound so raw and relentlessly vicious that it took listeners by the throat and demanded their undivided attention. Spawned from classic rock served hot like gumbo, it goes down like brisket wrapped in barbed wire and leaves its patrons begging for more. Like it or not, Southern metal is taking over every backwoods hick town and dirt road one lick at a time.

Memphis May Fire's Kellen McGregor defines Southern metal as, "the ability to wear cut off jeans above the knee without being laughed at." While that may be shamelessly accurate, there is far more to being a Southern dude than fireworks, barbecue, and cut off jeans.

It is impossible to discredit the impact of classic rock on today's Southern emergence. Bands like Lynyrd Skynyrd and Creedence Clearwater Revival set the foundations for groove based rock and roll, but legions of musicians would be quick to credit another for the spark required to start the Southern revolution. "Nobody can deny what the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd did for the genre, but the fusion of heavy metal and Southern rock really got put out into the mainstream by Pantera," cites I, Sleepwalker's Michael Grey.

"Heavy Metal" Josh Childers from the Showdown would expound, "We get a lot of stuff like, 'How much influence does Lynyrd Skynyrd have on your lyrics?'" and

Metal



I don't think we sound anything like Lynyrd Skynyrd. What was going on in the 70's and what's happening now are two different things...We are influenced a lot more by bands like Pantera and Metallica that had parts that were really pentatonic and had a little boogie in them...It's so weird that it's only been going for a year or two and there's already bands that don't know that this came from New Orleans, you talk about bands like EyeHateGod and Corrosion of Conformity and Down that started the whole thing. There's a lot of grit there, a lot of things that are straight up syncopated like a lot of metalcore is.

It seems to me like a lot of bands that were playing metalcore and playing hardcore had enough sense to realize that there are eight million local bands already doing the Norma Jean/ As I Lay Dying rip-off, and needed something else. This was a way to play really dynamic, groove oriented metal and still have breakdowns and big groove parts but put a little boogie in it, I know that's what it was for us."

With its roots firmly set in the South, Southern metal often finds itself blended with a dash of Southern heritage, and more specifically, the Confederacy. Maylene and the Sons of Disaster vocalist Dallas Taylor states, "I think so many people link the Civil War to race. Both sides had slaves and I feel the war was fought over money and land. Being from the South, and having members of my family fight in the war for the south, naturally I am going to feel a link between the Confederacy and myself. Know this: I do not approve of any type of slavery and I think it was a horrible thing, but I also feel people like to blame the South without even knowing anything about the war." Even the Yankee states own Josh Branas of Once Nothing agrees, "Being from the South and still waving the Confederate Flag is like us being

from Pittsburgh and waving the Terrible Towel during Steelers games." Grey also adds, "Its heritage, not hate. The Confederates stood up for what they believed and that's what this country is founded on, everybody has the right to do that."

While many bands find themselves passing through this pentatonic ghost town, very few ever intended to arrive here. "We didn't really set out to be a 'Southern rock band,' people just saw that we were from Texas and heard us doing bends and playing pentatonic scales, and now we're 'Southern,'" comments McGregor. "At this point we've kind of made a joke about the whole Southern thing. We carry a cowboy boot around at shows looking for tips so we can eat, we have a big Texas flag on our merch table, and we try to pepper in the word 'howdy' as much as possible, people seem to like that."

Thieves and Liars' guitarist Corey Edelmann explains, "I don't think we fall under the category of 'Southern metal.' For me, that better defines bands like Maylene and the Sons of Disaster. I would consider us just straight-up rock-and-roll with more of a classic rock influence than Southern rock influence. We are more into blues based bands like AC/DC, Cream, and Zeppelin. I think our sound allows us to be able to play with those bands and it is cool that those bands are adding that sound to metal, but we wouldn't consider ourselves a part of that scene."

Even the ringleader of the sound, Taylor, agrees. "I really don't know what Southern metal is. We take influences from all types of genres. We write about where we come from, our surroundings, we write what we know. Just be yourself. If you start a band just to sound Southern then you are not being true to yourself. We do not play music to try and

be popular. The reason we play music is to try and help out others. We have all had hard times and we write about our experiences in hopes that it will help others."

Childers expounds, "I don't think there's anything wrong with being genuinely into what you're doing, if you really like that groove there's nothing wrong with playing that sort of stuff, just do your own thing. If you like the Southern rock thing, you can have a little boogie in there if that's what really gets your rocks off, but make it yours."

Despite what side of the Mason-Dixon Line you find yourself on, Taylor's "write what you know" battle cry still rings true. Branas states, "We've never sat down and tried to write a 'Southern' riff or any of that stuff, we've never even referred to ourselves as Southern in any way. Most people are surprised that we're from Pittsburgh since people are so quick to lump certain bands and sounds to a specific area. We're from a blue collar town playing blue collar metal, there isn't anything Southern about us."

This is the birth of a new uprising. Whether it's screaming through the bayous or stampeding across the plains, Southern metal has ridden into today's scene and refuses to back down without a fight. Southern metal offers toe-tapping groove and boogie with cutthroat style breakdowns that blow the roof off every fireworks stand and smoke house in the county. Few genres find themselves with such an identity and proud heritage as this, and even fewer offer the same breed of honesty available in the message of these men.





What Kittie Says cont'd:

I've got one last question. Um, what's the short version of the evolution of how you guys dialed in your tone?

Uh, the short version of the evolution of how we dialed in our tone?

Yeah, like going back to your beginning and what your tone is like now.

We sort of learned over the years that less is more when it comes to, you know, the sound of what your amp is making and guitars and that sort of thing. Back in the day we were using, you know, fairly cheap equipment. I can remember my first amplifier... This is going to sound ridiculous, because this is how inexperienced with music we were, and how we just didn't have a lot of money and that sort of thing. I was using, like, a Fender Squire through a karaoke machine – you know what I mean? I don't know, I was, like, 10 years old or 12 years old. It was like I made due with what I had at that point. But, when I finally, you know, got an amp I think I had a Fender Rock 1000, and for me it was all about, like, "Let's turn it up to 10, everything up to 10!" You know, and have all kinds of feedback, and that kind of thing. Over the years we've realized that less is more, and especially working with Mesa (Boogie)'s. You can't really make one of those amps sound terrible. They are heavily compressed and a well-rounded metal-sounding amp. Especially with the recording of this new album, like I said, we learned that less is more thing and you know, in order to get big sound sometimes you have to keep the levels very, very low,

and the same goes for when we are playing live. You know, we try not to have our stage volume up too loud, just because it's the engineer's job to make us sound good. It doesn't necessarily sound the way that it does outside that it does onstage. You know, being in a band for a number of years now I've realized that, and so the less is more part for us is something that has worked for us for a few years now.

Cool. Well, thanks so much for taking time to chat with me today.

No problem. Thank you very much, and, uh, hopefully we'll speak again soon.

Yeah, hopefully, I'd like to see you on the road sometime.

Awesome, absolutely.

I'm in Austin, Texas, so if you ever come down...

Oh, are you? We're actually in Houston fairly soon, but I don't think we're playing in Austin on this tour, but I'm not sure how far away Houston is. You are welcome to come down and make the trip. I'll put you on the list if you'd like...

I'll give you a shout if that's the case.

Yeah, absolutely. Well, have a nice day...

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LABOR DAY WEEKEND 2008

RUN KID RUN



BY HALEY GLASCO

It's 1:42 and there is still no word from David Curtis. Finally... "I'm sorry, I guess we were supposed to call at 1:00, but our manager just told us, like, 10 minutes ago." Understandably late, Run Kid Run has literally been "running" around for the past 2 months non-stop. "These last couple of months have been quite stressful. We were dealing with our van breaking down, had 5 different bass players, and we were trying to write the record and procrastinating until, like, the last month. It just felt like we were just barely holding on, and we were like, 'OK, we've got to push through this, it's gonna be fine once the record is done.' We were still doing weekend dates, so we were traveling all over the place and trying to write the record during the weekdays. It was just hectic."

The record may be finished, but RKR won't have much down time. The group is set to open for Hawk Nelson on the *Green T Tour* for the next 2 months. But, RKR is recuperated and ready to go. The new album, *Love At The Core*, boasts new creativeness from the band.

"There are a lot of things about this record, musically, that I would say are a little different; we really stretched our boundaries as writers. Sometimes we have more aggressive songs and then we have a few ballads that are totally stripped down, which is unlike us. We are also really excited, because we have been playing these old songs forever; so we get to play some of the new ones. I know that, from a band's point of view, that is always the most exciting thing – to get to play new material. We are excited to get to show off some of our new stuff."

The band said *This Is Who We Are* was "about finding your true sense of self, and then holding on to that with all you have." The new album incorporates that idea, but extends it to integrate the themes of love and compassion. "A lot of the songs hit the love theme, so we ended up calling the album *Love at the Core*. We did that, because it seems like that's the one true thing that really shows Christ's love. Each song hits that theme that God's love is what brings us back to Him, His never-ending love. Love for the world, plus to show love is the true way of showing Christ; just being compassionate and real."

Love is not just a theme for the band; it's a philosophy for their lives. When asked about the many critics out there in the world, David responded: "The anti-hater would definitely be someone that listens to the other's opinion without swaying your own. If we were to talk about another religion like Scientology or whatever, I guess I would just have an open ear at least to hear; to hear that person out and just be compassionate to the other human being about their ideas without swaying. If you were to talk about Christianity, you know, just hearing their point of view, but standing firm on your belief, and just showing love and not just bashing their ideas or bashing their thoughts because you would hope the same for you. So, just loving your neighbor as you would want to be loved; which is one of the Great Commandments, loving God with all your heart, mind and soul, and then loving your neighbor as yourself. Which I think is so simple, but it's just as simple as that: treat everyone as you want to be treated and show compassion and be there for them."

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GRAVE ROBBER – BE AFRAID +1

If you like your gothic/horror hard rock spiked with a little arsenic and a healthy dose of dark humor, check out Be Afraid! Band members Dr. Cadaver, Nameless, and Maggot offer you chainsaw guitars, super-tight arrangements, and blatant morbidity wrapped around insanely catchy choruses. Wretched provides elite vocal skills in a mesmerizing Danzig/Rob Halford sort of way! For fans of Alice Cooper, Type-O-Negative, The Misfits and Danzig! See them in concert at Cornerstone 2008! Includes industrial remix by Angel of the mainstream metal band DOPE!
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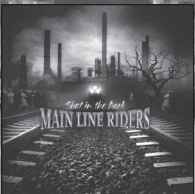
WHITECROSS – NINETEEN EIGHTY SEVEN (with 6 bonus tracks)

Complete Re-recording of original debut self-titled 1987 release featuring the bonus tracks "Love On The Line" and "Re:Animate" (all Rex Carroll guitar jam/solo) + 4 hidden out takes. Fans of Ratt, Motley Crue, and Stryper won't find anything more worthy of their money than this release! Originally released on Girder Records, this instant classic now finds new life with Retroactive Records.



ULTIMATUM – INTO THE PIT

The masters of thrash metal are back!!! Into the Pit qualifies as a juggernaut of North American metal. Following the footsteps of fellow peers Exodus, Tourniquet, Vengeance Rising, Megadeth, Overkill, and Forbidden, expect fiery, blowtorch riffs and scorching solos, thundering bass, fast drumming and a wealth of Mastodonian rifferry, the boys have clearly learned from their elders, and learned well!



MAIN LINE RIDERS – SHOT IN THE DARK

Anthemic hooks, cleverly mixing snarl and attitude, the band has no problems paying homage to their musical rabbis, AC/DC, Guns-n-Roses, and Skid Row, while appealing to fans of modern day bands Vains of Jenna, Buck Cherry, and The Showdown.

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Retroactive Records

UnChristian. Not your first thought when thinking of a band hilariously named for a killer robots line in the infamous eighties sci-fi flick *Logan's Run*. But that term would seem to be a possibility when Destroy the Runner requests you not to use the word "Christian" to describe them, even though they are signed to the Christian-affiliated label SolidState. The evidence builds when you hear that the band has made some major changes from the sound and approach of their first disc, *Saints*. But by the time you discover that the title of the band's new album is *I, Lucifer*, the verdict appears to be a foregone conclusion. Destroy the Runner is unChristian. Case closed.

Not so fast. As an interview with lead singer Chad Ackerman reveals, such a conclusion may in fact be warranted, but not in the sense that you think.

First a little background. *Saints* burst on the scene in 2006 to reviews that often found them to be a quality act, but lacking in originality. Punknews.org called them "Diet Darkest Hour," and eschewed the melodic singing sometimes interspersed with the standard screams. Jesusfreakhideout.com said the CD, "doesn't offer much sound-wise that's different than every other metal-core band out there..." Even though Decapolis.com at first raves, "*Saints* is an album that goes for the throat right away," eventually they tell fans it's an album to listen to "without requiring too much of your concentration."

Exit original vocalist Kyle Setter and bassist Jeremiah Crespo at the end of 2006, and enter Chad Ackerman, new bassist Tanner, and a new writing approach from DTR in 2007. Chad has logged time on guitar and vocals with Metal Blade's As I Lay Dying, Island's Die Trying, and his dormant but still-with-a-heartbeat startup, Chapter 14. Tanner also hails from Chapter 14, and his audition came off great with the other DTR guys.

Of the new sound, Chad calls *Saints*, "more metalcore," but terms the new disc "way more progressive, melodic," and adding that "it's way more thought out," he terms it "intelligent." While such a description, along with the admission that it contains a great deal more singing, may scare the pit moves out of some typical metalheads, hard music listeners hungering after something new and creative may whet their appetites or wet their pants over Chad's description of *I, Lucifer*. Whichever category you fall into, you have to believe the album has a great pedigree with manager Tim Lambesis (As I Lay Dying) and producer Brian McTernan (Thrice, Circa Survive, the Bled, and many others).

So where does a boy that grew up with his Mom allowing him to listen only to Christian music come up with an album concept like *I, Lucifer*? And is DTR now unChristian? "I just focused on my lyrics night and day," says Chad of his time in the studio, letting the other guys create much of the sound. And his inspiration? "I was reading a lot." Like what? "Definitely the Bible. I love Paul

... but also, I was reading this book called, *A Mandate for Mercy*, by Don Stephens. It just tells you ... how, if you have a relationship with God, in your heart you should feel called to help people in need."

Now that doesn't sound too unchristian, now does it? So why avoid the term "Christian" or its many derivatives? Chad says of Lucifer, "In the Bible... God creates him as the most beautiful angel, in charge of the music ... and he's, like, on top of all the other angels ... and now, when you hear the word, 'Lucifer,' you just think of evil, you think of dark, you think of disgusting." Chad sees a parallel in the world and subculture many people call "Christianity."

Growing up in a Christian school environment, Chad had his eyes opened when he went to public high school and in the years since. He had to become accustomed to reactions like, "'Oh, you're Christian. Oh, gosh. Don't condemn me.'" He observed, "... a lot of people are just really turned off to 'Christianity,' and if they're turned off to 'Christianity' that makes 'em turned off to God ... even having a chance about hearing about a relationship with God."

Now we're getting somewhere. "And so, basically, I named the album *I, Lucifer*, because I kind of wanted to get that out there." Seeing much of organized Christianity in Jesus' words to the religious legalists of His day, Ackerman says, "It's basically the Christian that's pointing out a splinter in everybody's eye." He then drops the hammer in a way that will undoubtedly hit many hard, "Christianity's basically become a Lucifer in this generation." Sympathy for the Devil, indeed.

DTR's point is strikingly like that made in *unChristian: What a New Generation really Thinks about Christianity ... and Why It Matters*, a recent research-based book by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons. The point is this: "Modern-day Christianity no longer seems Christian" (p. 29). So in this sense, yes, DTR might be okay with being called, "unchristian." Chad says a better term for describing the band might be "spirituality."

And for what sort of thing should the *I, Lucifer* era Destroy the Runner become known? Admitting his hope that DTR can go full-time, Ackerman says, "I guess I'd say the goal of the music is to get it out as big as we can get it, and make this band as successful as we can get it. And then as people ... we all love people, we love God, and we just want to help people make friends and make relationships in the process."

"Aside from the Christian bumper stickers, and the Christian shirts, and the Jesus fish on the car – I mean, if that's Christianity, that's not a relationship. I mean ... the relationship is talking to people, loving on people, God working through you."

Destroy the Runner and *I, Lucifer*. What could be more unChristian than that?



How to label a thing

HARDNEWS

Page seventy-eight



The Human Flight Committee

BY MATT CONNER

Ready or not, The Human Flight Committee is coming. The latest addition to the Blue Duck Records roster (After the Sirens) released *Oh, When The Animals Unionize* in March and the band couldn't be more prepared.

"Essentially we're gonna force ourselves upon the listeners of our type of music," laughs singer Aaron Shelton. "We're just in the mindset that nothing can stop us aside from God telling us this isn't what we're supposed to be doing. He's the only one who can stop us. We're in full gear right now."

That level of determination and conviction just might push HFC over the top in what can be a crowded post-punk genre. Then again, it could just as easily be their love for animals on television.

"Oddly enough, the bass player and drummer and I lived together and we were watching a lot of Animal Planet," explains Shelton. "We were obsessed with animals at the time and their interactions. Yes, they hunt each other and they need food, but the name comes from the idea that they don't screw each other over like humans do. There is no personal backstabbing or maliciousness in the animal kingdom. The name is called *Oh, When The Animals Unionize*

and it's the idea that if the animals ever got together – and this is a pathetic science fiction story – we'd be in trouble, because we never stop screwing each other over."

It's a fitting description since most of the album deals with themes of betrayal of all sorts. And that's something the band has learned first-hand.

"Unfortunately, we have individually and as a band been through a lot of betrayal. Not saying that we haven't done that personally. We're human. But there are a lot of songs about us being betrayed as a band or by individuals. The entire album isn't a downer. A lot of it is inspiration and about life after betrayal, but that's definitely the running theme."

It's a good thing the band maintains good friendships amidst the relational hurt. Guests include Stephen Christian of Anberlin fame on vocals, lending the band a bit more credibility as they move forward. And Shelton seems fully aware of the help that it brings.

"As far as direct support of the band, I would say that is one of the most legitimate things that has happened for us – that such a talent was willing to lend himself to our project."

News bullets

This Beautiful Republic along with **Family Force 5**, **Falling Up** and **Spoken** were a part of the *Heart Support Tour*. The organization teamed with heartsupport.com, an online support community which offers hope and practical resources to those struggling with addictions, depression, self-injury, eating disorders and suicide.

mychildren mybride are touring their new album with **Unearth** and **Bury Your Dead**.

Letter To The Exiles signed with Harvest Earth Records.

Denison Witmer has begun recording a new album with friends **Rosie Thomas** and **James McAlister**.

BEC Recordings signed **Chris Taylor**. Check out his debut release *Take Me Anywhere*.

Tonecrash Records is pleased to announce the addition of **Finding Favour** to its label roster.

As I Lay Dying will be touring through May 23rd with friends **August Burns Red**, **Misery Signals** & **Evergreen Terrace**.

Bombworks Records is proud to announce that Canadian death metal phenom **Sympathy** is joining the label.

South Australia metallers, **Synnové**, released their long awaited, first full-length album, *The Whore and the Bride*.

Bethany Dillon and **Matt Hammit** released their new collaborations *In Christ Alone: Modern Hymns of Worship*

Introducing: **Tenth Avenue North**. The band recently released their debut album *Over and Underneath*.

Facedown Records announces the launch of the new **Kingston Falls** video for "freakin' eXtreme."

After Edmund celebrated their debut album in true rock & roll style - at the home of the King of Rock & Roll himself, Elvis Presley.



For Today

BY BRAD MOIST

Sioux City just sounds tough. It has that tough guy sound to it when it comes out of your mouth. And for the five guys of For Today, there are some things in Sioux City that do make it tough for a band to break. "We have a small scene here so unlike bands from major California cities, or just big cities in general, we can't fund a van from one local show or get 600 kids in the door when we play our home" says drummer David Morrison.

"When For Today started we started the scene for most of the 'core' genres and underground music of that type and Sioux City has tried and tried to keep it alive but local bands just continue to break up and shows have still never really exploded to the potential they could in a town of 100,000 people. There are plenty of nu-metal bands and metal heads here but it would still be 'crazy' to have over 250 people at a show of our genre here." The guys have seen some shows that give hope to a potential growth and symbolize that there are some tough guys in their area. "I brought Haste The Day and I remember at one point in their set the entire room was a pit of shirtless guys. It was quite the sight to see – a bunch of shirtless dudes from Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska throwing down. Though the 'toughest' show by definition would definitely be when I booked

Seventh Star and Jesus Wept. It was really short notice and I think only 30 kids came. We had a good time, though" says David, who also manages and books the band's shows.

Regardless of the lack of a huge local scene, the band caught the attention of Facedown Records by touring and performing over 200 shows independently last year. Take note indie bands: that's how you do it, and not just tough guy bands. They also just finished up recording their debut album, *Ekklesia*, with producer Jamie King (Between the Buried and Me, He Is Legend, Secret Lives of the Freemasons). It's a midwest metal-core album that is as ferocious as it is passionate. Think August Burns Red meets Between the Buried and Me musically. And it's possible that besides the lack of a good local scene, the tough weather that attacks the Midwest might have played a part into the passion that drives these guys to tour... if they can get out of the driveway. "The weather can be hard when you hit winter. Looking outside my window right now I can see two feet of snow and it is freezing! Sometimes when we're leaving for tour, it makes it hard to get out of town," says David. Though for throat specialist Mattie Montgomery, who just moved from Columbus, OH, to Sioux City recently, the new hometown seems almost heavenly. "I imagine that heaven is going to be a lot like the Midwest – only with less snow."

The David Crowder Band is offering fans a limited edition of *Remedy*, which includes a bonus DVD.

Cinder Road toured their debut album, *Super Human*, with **Red** this spring.

Head over to **Search The City's** myspace page to hear a new song they've posted called, "Ambulance Chaser." The song is off their new album, *A Fire So Big The Heavens Can See It*.

House Of Heroes gave away three new songs free to fans with the full album *The End Is Not The End*.

Disciple's new song, "In The Middle of it Now," will be among the tracks featured on *WWE: The Music Vol. 8*.

Impending Doom are touring in support of their debut album *Nailed. Dead. Risen*. Impending Doom will also be making stops at the first night of Facedown Fest, the New England Metal and Hardcore Fest and July 3rd on the Underground Stage at the Cornerstone Festival.

Soundmass is pleased to sign new Australian band **Dei Elithaeon**.

Greeley Estates have posted the video for "Blue Morning" on myspace.com/greeleyestates.

Canadian-based pop/rock band **Hello Kelly** released their highly anticipated, self-titled full-length album.

The Wedding's brand new trailer was stolen from the apartment complex they were staying at while writing new music.

Check out **Hawk Nelson's** music video for "Friend Like That" at amazon.com

Creation Festival has announced that it is expanding to launch *Creation Festival: The Tour*. Visiting 20 cities will be a lineup that includes Kutless, **TFK**, Pillar, **KJ-52**, Fireflight, **Worth Dying For**, **Run Kid Run**, **Children 18:3**, and **Bob Lenz**.

Red Flecks recently returned from their tour in South Africa.

HM

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SCRIPTURE "This is what the Sovereign Lord,
 the Holy One of Israel, says:
 'In repentance and rest is your
 salvation, in quietness and trust is
 your strength...'"
 (Isaiah 30:15)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Letters to the Editor



HM-style Resident Assistant

I have been reading this magazine for 4 years now and I look forward to the new issue. I really can't get enough of HM – so much so that I sat down and went through my entire collection and found pictures, articles and words that really spoke to me and turned them into a table. I am a college student and a RA to 42 first year students. It is a very trying job. Lots of guys in and out of my room/office and lots of issues at hand. But every time someone new comes in they sit down and see my coffee table with this huge collage on it and immediately I can find commonality with the guys on my floor. Whether it be music, philosophy, religion or the complete opposite. This table has invoked some really great talks and discussions not only to believers but to non-believers. It wouldn't be possible without the articles your staff put together and the thoughts and emotions that are pasted right there on the page. I'm sorry I cut up all those magazines, but think of it as taking a great thing and making it better; for my environment, that is. Words always seem to fail me, so luckily God blessed me with working hands. I prefer to let my hands do the talking. So, thank you, HM magazine!!

–Nathan Cooper, via internet

The Cat is Out

So, what can we expect from the HM Magazine Stage this year at the big 25th Anniversary C'stone? Or, is it too early to let the cat out of the bag???

–Brian Lang, via internet

Ed – Here ya go: *Showbread; Thieves & Liars; I, Sleepwalker; Once Nothing; Inhale/Exhale; Drottmar; Immortal Souls; The Famine; DJ; Leper; Paris Orobis; Rackets & Drapes; Sanctum; The Awakening. And at Sonshine, it's: Haste the Day; The Chariot; Kingston Falls; Oh Sleeper; Emarosa; No Wings to Speak Of; Hands; Project 86; August Burns Red; War of Ages; Inhale Exhale; Burden of a Day; With Blood Comes Cleansing; Common Yet Forbidden; As I Lay Dying; Maylene & the Sons of Disaster; Flatfoot 56; Means; A Plea for Purging; I, Sleepwalker; and For Today.*

Will HM Go the Route of CCM?

Do you have any plans to discontinue print issues anytime in the near future?

–Mr.Bill, via internet

Ed – No, HM Magazine does not plan on following suit. We plan on printing a magazine until the good Lord tells us otherwise; as it's always cool to hold and read a magazine on the bus, on the couch, in the Starbucks... Subscribers to CCM, by the way, have been offered a transfer of their subscriptions to HM.

Zao?

I was just wondering if there was any updated info on Zao. The last I heard, they were going to tour less, but still release albums. But they fail to update their sites regularly. I've been checking their sites and reading your mag to find any further info to no avail. Anything?

–Tim H, via internet

Ed – According to their manager, Ryan Downey, they're still together and will be active in some way very soon. How's that for an update?

Living Sacrifice – Don't Even Say No!

You can't tell me that Living Sacrifice will not earn AT LEAST one cover spot this year! Best news in the world. A band that saw they were a tool of God and went with it. None of that 'we're Christians in a band stuff' that almost every band does now. I'd be interested to see how it all came together. Keep up the good work with the mag. I normally don't do this, but upon reading about Here I Come Falling, I checked 'em out and love 'em. Bought the album upon its release. I'm curious of your thoughts on Gwen Stacy's release too? I like them a lot. Anyways, God bless.

–Drew Tilley, via internet

Ed – Living Sacrifice will not earn a cover spot this year. There, I said it. Now, let me clarify: I predict that it'll be several months before a reunited Living Sacks of Rice album hits shelves, so until then we will wait for the anticipated cover story. That's how we roll... I like that Gwen Stacy album, by the way.

HM and Guitar Hero Unite!

I can't be the first person to think of this, especially considering how behind the times I am in just now playing *Guitar Hero*. But how awesome would it be to have an HM version? I mean, to be able to play Living Sacrifice, Project 86, and Galactic Cowboys... I drool at the thought of it. Let's start a petition or something!

–Chad Sides, via internet

Ed – Uh, please, no.

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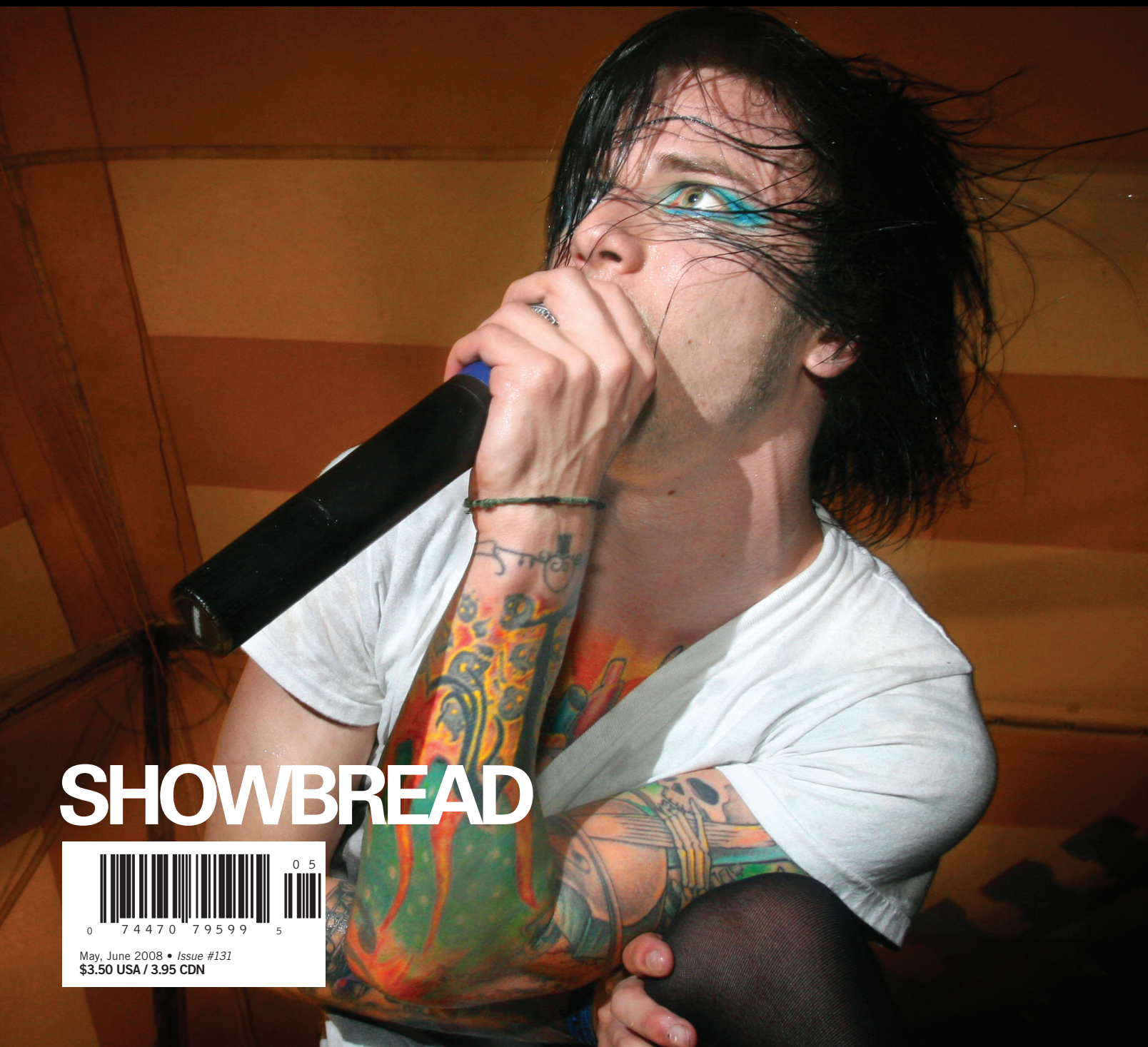
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